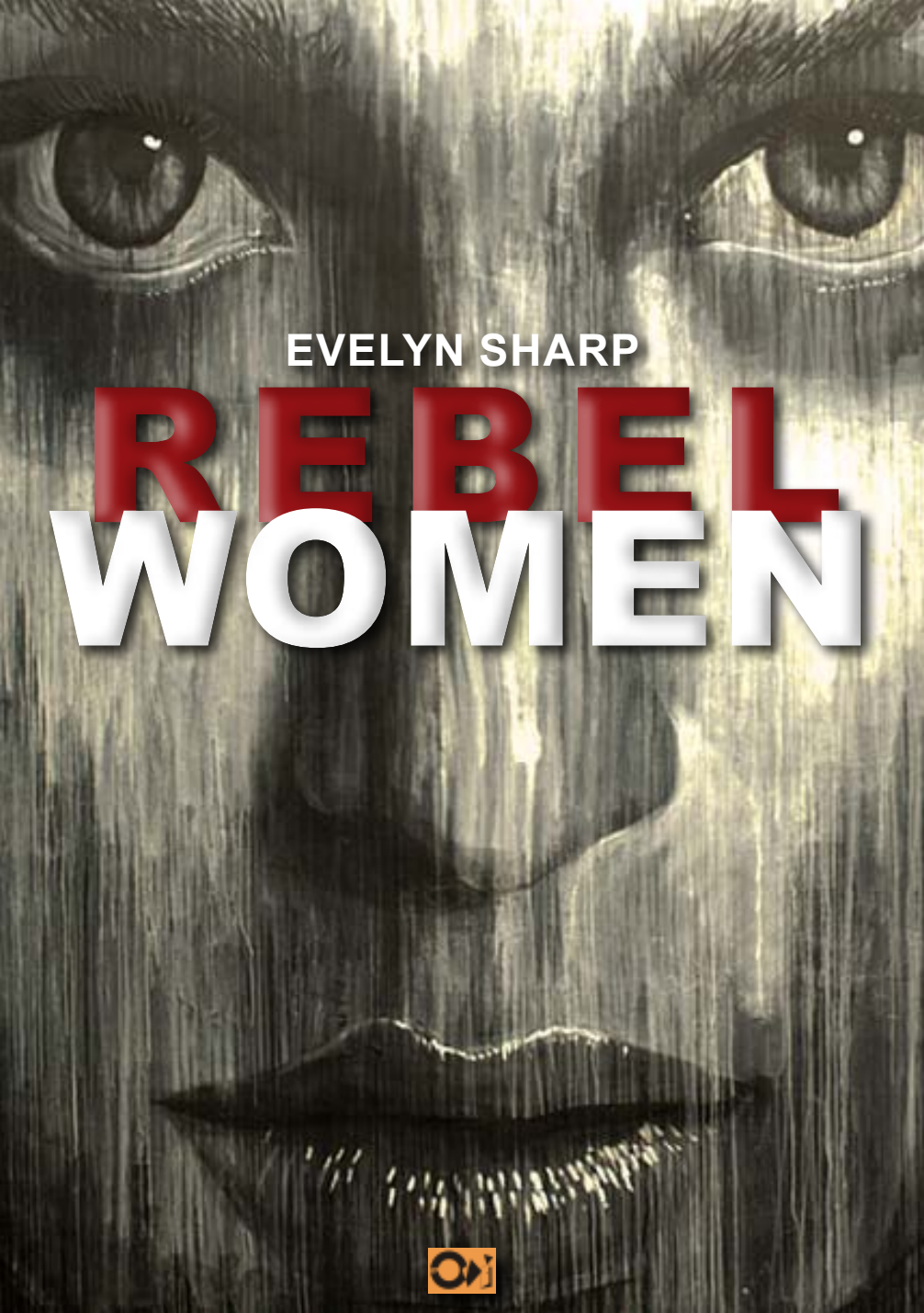
EVELYN SHARP
REBEL
WOMEN

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Evelyn Sharp

Rebel women

An Ovi eBooks Publication

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I
The Women at the Gate

"Funny, isn't it?" said the young man on the top of the omnibus.

"No," said the young woman from whom he appeared to expect an answer, "I don't think it is funny."

"Take care," said the young man's friend, nudging him, "perhaps she's one of them!"

Everybody within hearing laughed, except the woman, who did not seem to be aware that they were talking about her. She was on her feet, steadying herself by grasping the back of the seat in front of her, and her eyes, non-committal in their lack of expression, were bent on the roaring, restless crowd that

surged backwards and forwards in the Square below, where progress was gradually becoming an impossibility due to the stream of traffic struggling towards Whitehall. The thing she wanted to find was not down there, among the slipping horses, the swaying men and women, the moving lines of policemen; nor did it lurk in those denser blocks of humanity that marked a spot, here and there, where some resolute, battered woman was setting her face towards the gate of St. Stephen's; nor was the thing she sought to be found behind that locked gate of liberty where those in possession, stronger far in the convention of centuries than locks or bars could make them, stood in their well-bred security, immeasurably shocked at the scene before them and most regrettably shaken, as some of them were heard to murmur, in a lifelong devotion to the women's cause.

The searching gaze of the woman on the omnibus wandered for an instant from all this, away to Westminster Bridge and the blue distance of Lambeth, where darting lamps, like will-o'-the-wisps come to town, added a touch of magic relief to the dinginess of night. Then she came back again to the sharp realism of the foreground and found no will-o'-the-wisps there, only the lights of London shining on a picture she should remember to the end of her life. It did not

matter, for the thing beyond it all that she wanted to be sure of, shone through rain and mud alike.

"Lookin' for a friend of yours, p'raps?" said a not unfriendly woman with a baby, who was also standing up to obtain a more comprehensive view of what was going on below.

"No," was the answer again, "I am looking at something that isn't exactly there; at least——"

"If I was you, miss," interrupted the facetious youth, with a wink at his companion, "I should chuck looking for what ain't there, and——"

She turned and smiled at him unexpectedly. "Perhaps you are right," she said. "And yet, if I didn't hope to find what isn't there, I couldn't go through with what I have to do to-night."

The amazed stare of the young man covered her, as she went swiftly down the steps of the omnibus and disappeared in the crowd.

"Balmy, the whole lot of 'em!" commented the conductor briefly.

The woman with the passionless eyes was threading her way through the straggling clusters of people that

fringed the great crowd where it thinned out towards Broad Sanctuary. A girl wearing the militant tricolour in her hat, brushed against her, whispered, "Ten been taken, they say; they're knocking them about terribly to-night!" and passed noiselessly away. The first woman went on, as though she had not heard.

A roar of voices and a sudden sway of the throng that pinned her against some railings at the bottom of Victoria Street, announced the eleventh arrest. A friendly artisan in working clothes swung her up till she stood beside him on the stone coping, and told her to "ketch on." She caught on, and recovered her breath laboriously.

The woman, who had been arrested after being turned back from the doors of the House repeatedly for two successive hours, was swept past in the custody of an inspector, who had at last put a period to the mental and physical torment that a pickpocket would have been spared. A swirling mass of people, at once interested and puzzled, sympathetic and uncomprehending, was swept along with her and round her. In her eyes was the same unemotional, detached look that filled the gaze of the woman clinging to the railings. It was the only remarkable thing about her; otherwise, she was just an ordinary workaday woman,

rather drab-looking, undistinguished by charm or attraction, as these things are generally understood.

"Now then, please, every one who wants a vote must keep clear of the traffic. Pass along the footway, ladies, if you please; there's no votes to be had in the middle of the roadway," said the jocular voice of the mounted constable, who was backing his horse gently and insistently into the pushing, struggling throng.

The jesting tone was an added humiliation; and women in the crowd, trying to see the last of their comrade and to let her know that they were near her then, were beaten back, hot with helpless anger. The mounted officer came relentlessly on, successfully sweeping the pavement clear of the people whom he was exhorting with so much official reasonableness not to invade the roadway. He paused once to salute and to avoid two men, who, having piloted a lady through the backwash of the torrent set in motion by the plunging horse, were now hoisting her into a place of safety just beyond the spot where the artisan and the other woman held on to the railings.

"Isn't it terrible to see women going on like this?" lamented the lady breathlessly. "And they say some of them are quite nice—like us, I mean."

The artisan, who, with his neighbour, had managed to evade the devastating advance of the mounted policeman, suddenly put his hand to his mouth and emitted a hoarse cheer.

"Bravo, little 'un!" he roared. "Stick to it! Votes for women, I say! Votes for women!"

The crowd, friendly to the point of admiring a struggle against fearful odds which they yet allowed to proceed without their help, took up the words with enthusiasm; and the mud-bespattered woman went away to the haven of the police station with her war-cry ringing in her ears.

The man who had led the cheer turned to the woman beside him, as though to justify his impulse. "It's their pluck," he said. "If the unemployed had half as much, they'd have knocked sense into this Government long ago!"

A couple of yards away, the lady was still lamenting what she saw in a plaintive and disturbed tone. Unconsciously, she was putting herself on the defensive.

"I shouldn't blame them," she maintained, "if they did something really violent, like—like throwing bombs and things. I could understand that. But all

this—all this silly business of trying to get into the House of Commons, when they know beforehand that they can't possibly do it—oh, it's so sordid and loathsome! Did you see that woman's hair, and the way her hat was bashed in, and the mud on her nose? Ugh!"

"You can't have all the honour and glory of war, and expect to keep your hair tidy too," observed one of the men, slightly amused.

"War!" scoffed his wife. "There's none of the glory of war in this."

Her glance ranged, as the other woman's had done, over the dull black stream of humanity rolling by at her feet, over the wet and shining pavements, casting back their myriad distorted reflections in which street lamps looked like grinning figures of mockery—over the whole drear picture of London at its worst. She saw only what she saw, and she shuddered with distaste as another mounted officer came sidling through the crowd, pursuing another hunted rebel woman, who gave way only inch by inch, watching her opportunity to face once more towards the locked gate of liberty. Evidently, she had not yet given sufficient proof of her unalterable purpose to have earned the mercy of arrest; and a ring of com-

passionate men formed round her as a body-guard, to allow her a chance of collecting her forces. A reinforcement of mounted police at once bore down upon the danger spot, and by the time these had worked slowly through the throng, the woman and her supporters had gone, and a new crowd had taken the place of the former one.

"Oh, there's none of the glory of war in that!" cried the woman again, a tremble in her voice.

"There is never any glory in war—at least, not where the war is," said her second companion, speaking for the first time. His voice travelled to the ear of the other woman, still clinging to the railings with the artisan. She glanced round at him swiftly, and as swiftly let him see that she did not mean to be recognized; and he went on talking as if he had not seen her turn round.

"This is the kind of thing you get on a bigger scale in war," he said, in a half-jesting tone, as if ashamed of seeming serious. "Same mud and slush, same grit, same cowardice, same stupidity and beastliness all round. The women here are fighting for something big; that's the only difference. Oh, there's another, of course; they're taking all the kicks themselves and giving none of 'em back. I suppose it has to be that

way round when you're fighting for your souls and not for your bodies."

"I didn't know you felt like that about it," said the woman, staring at him curiously. "Oh, but of course you can't mean that real war is anything like this wretched scuffle of women and police!"

"Oh, yes," returned the other, in the same tone of gentle raillery. "Don't you remember Monsieur Bergeret? He was perfectly right. There is no separate art of war, because in war you merely practise the arts of peace rather badly, such as baking and washing, and cooking and digging, and travelling about. On the spot it is a wretched scuffle; and the side that wins is the side that succeeds in making the other side believe it to be invincible. When the women can do that, they've won."

"They don't look like doing it to-night, do they?" said the woman's husband breezily. "Thirteen women and six thousand police, you know!"

"Exactly. That proves it," retorted the man, who had fought in real wars. "They wouldn't bring out six thousand police to arrest thirteen men, even if they all threw bombs, as your wife here would like to see."

"The police are not there only to arrest the women——"

"That's the whole point," was the prompt reply. "You've got to smash an idea as well as an army in every war, still more in every revolution, which is always fought exclusively round an idea. If thirteen women batter at the gates of the House of Commons, you don't smash the idea by arresting the thirteen women, which could be done in five minutes. So you bring out six thousand police to see if that will do it. That is what lies behind the mud and the slush—the idea you can't smash."

A man reeled along the pavement and lurched up against them.

"Women in trousers! What's the country coming to?" he babbled; and bystanders laughed hysterically.

"Come along; let's get out of this," said the woman's husband hurriedly; and the trio went off in the direction of the hotel.

The woman with the passionless eyes looked after them. "He sees what we see," she murmured.

"Seems he's been in the army, active service, too," remarked the artisan in a sociable manner. "I like the way he conversed, myself."

"He understands, that is all," explained his companion. "He sees what it all means—all this, I mean, that the ordinary person calls a failure because we don't succeed in getting into the House. Do you remember, in 'Agamemnon'—have you read 'Agamemnon'?"

It did not strike her as strange that she should be clasping iron railings in Westminster, late on a wet evening, talking to a working-man about Greek tragedy. The new world she was treading to-night, in which things that mattered were given their true proportions, and important scruples of a lifetime dwindled to nothingness, gave her a fresh and a whimsical insight into everything that happened; and the odd companion that chance had flung her, half an hour ago, became quite easily the friend she wanted at the most friendless moment she had ever known.

The man, without sharing her reasons for a display of unusual perception, seemed equally unaware of any strangeness in the situation.

"No, miss, I haven't read it," he answered. "That's Greek mythology, isn't it? I never learnt to speak Greek."

"Nor I," she told him; "but you can get it translat-

ed into English prose. It reminds me always of our demonstrations in Parliament Square, because there is a chorus in it of stupid old men, councillors, they are, I think, who never understand what is going on, however plainly it is put to them. When Cassandra prophesies that Agamemnon is going to be murdered—as we warn the Prime Minister when we are coming to see him—they pretend not to see what she is driving at, because if they did, they would have to do something. And then, when her prophecy comes true and he is murdered—of course, the analogy ends here, because we are not out to murder anybody, only to make the Prime Minister hear our demands—they run about wringing their hands and complaining; but nobody does anything to stop it. It really is rather like the evasions of the Home Office when people ask questions in Parliament about the prison treatment of the Suffragettes, isn't it?"

"Seems so," agreed her new friend, affably.

"And then," continued the woman, scorn rising in her voice, "when Clytaemnestra comes out of the house and explains why she has murdered her husband, they find plenty to say because there is a woman to be blamed, though they never blamed Agamemnon for doing far worse things to her. That is

the way the magistrate and the daily papers will talk to-morrow, when our women are brought up in the police court."

"That's it! Always put all the blame on the women," said the artisan, grasping what he could of her strange discourse.

Big Ben tolled out ten strokes, and his companion, catching her breath, looked with sudden apprehension at the moving, throbbing block of people, now grown so immense that the police, giving up the attempt to keep the road clear, were merely concerned in driving back the throng on four sides and preserving an open space round the cluster of buildings known to a liberty-loving nation as the People's House. The gentlemen, who still stood in interested groups behind the barred gates of it, found the prospect less entertaining now that the action had been removed beyond the range of easy vision; and some of the bolder ones ventured out into the hollow square, formed by an unbroken line of constables, who were standing shoulder to shoulder, backed by mounted men who made little raids from time to time on the crowd behind, now fast becoming a very ugly one. Every possible precaution was being taken to avoid the chance of annoyance to any one who might still

wish to preserve a decorous faith in the principle of women's liberty.

Meanwhile, somewhere in that shouting, hustling, surging mass of humanity, as the woman onlooker knew full well, was the twelfth member of the women's deputation that had been broken up by the police, two hours ago, before it could reach the doors of the House; and knowing that her turn had come now, she pictured that twelfth woman beating against a barrier that had been set up against them both ever since the world grew civilized. There was not a friend near, when she nodded to the artisan and slipped down from her temporary resting-place. The respectable and sympathetic portion of the crowd was cut off from her, away up towards Whitehall, whither it had followed the twelfth woman. On this side of Parliament Square all the idlers, all the coarse-tongued reprobates of the slums of Westminster, never far distant from any London crowd, were herded together in a stupid, pitiless, ignorant mob. The slough of mud underfoot added the last sickening touch to a scene that for the flash of an instant made her heart fail.

"St. James's Park is the nearest station, miss," said the man, giving her a helping hand. "Don't advise you to try the Bridge; might find it a bit rough getting across."

She smiled back at him from the kerbstone, where she stood hovering a second or two on the fringe of the tumult and confusion. Her moment's hesitation was gone, and the sure look had come back to her eyes.

"I am not going home," she told him. "I am the thirteenth woman, you see."

She left the artisan staring at the spot near the edge of the pavement where the crowd had opened and swallowed her up.

"And she so well-informed too!" he murmured. "I don't like to think of it—I don't like to think of it!"

Shortly after midnight two men paused, talking, under the shadow of Westminster Abbey, and watched a patrol of mounted police that ambled at a leisurely pace across the deserted Square. The light in the Clock Tower was out. Thirteen women, granted a few hours' freedom in return for a word of honour, had gone to their homes, proudly conscious of having once more vindicated the invincibility of their cause; and some five or six hundred gentlemen had been able to issue in safety from the stronghold of liberty, which they had once more proved to themselves to be impregnable. And on the morrow the prisoners

of war would again pay the price of the victory that both sides thought they had won.

"If that is like real war too," said one of the men to the other, who had just made these observations aloud, "how does anybody ever know which side has won?"

"By looking to see which side pays the price of victory," answered the man who had fought in real wars.

II
To Prison while the Sun Shines

Once, when I went to Holloway Gaol to visit a friend who had been sent there by a puzzled Government, the wardress who led me across the echoing stone yard was inspired to make a little pleasant conversation.

"It's pretty here in summer," she remarked sombrely.

At the time it was natural, perhaps, to credit her with a grim sense of humour; but a morning spent not long afterwards in a London police court suggested another explanation. You cannot sit in a police court and watch while men and women pass out

into captivity, without realizing how many there are of us who go through the world snatching desperately at the air for some of the colour of life. I think my wardress-guide would scarcely have burst out with her involuntary remark had not some one come in from the outside to remind her that she lived in a grey semblance of a world, full of people who had tried to take a short cut to happiness and managed to get lost on the way. It was her instinctive human defence of a system that thinks to cure a desire for sunshine by shutting it out.

All the people I saw convicted in the police court that morning went to prison while the sun shone; for it was one of those irrepressible summer days that even London smoke cannot succeed in dimming. The brilliance of it had touched the official soul of the constable who guarded the door; and the little crowd on the pavement, clamouring with or without justification for admittance, was at least being handled with wit and good humour.

"Only those under remand, if you please!" remonstrated the doorkeeper politely, placing on one side the little woman who was waving a visiting-card at him. "Press, did you say, madam? Pressing to get in, I should call it, wouldn't you? Well, well, I can't say what might happen presently if you care to wait on

the chance. Those under remand only. Yes, yes, to be sure! If you were let out on bail the previous evening, you're under remand; but you're not a prisoner yet, or you wouldn't be out here, would you now? Pass inside, please. The other lady is your mother? Some of you ladies can show a lot of mothers to-day, it seems to me. Right along the footway, ladies, if you please. Those under remand only!"

A man with a blue paper in his hand made a path with some difficulty through the crowd of waiting women who continued to throng the pavement with courageous patience. He was admitted without question, but wore the air of a man who felt that his natural prerogative as a frequenter of police courts was being infringed. Certainly the constable who guarded the door took far less interest in him than in the ladies on remand; and he was received without any wit at all. After him came the gentlemen of the press, who were also passed in without comment; and seeing this, the lady with the visiting-card resumed her plea.

"Oh, come along," said the indulgent constable; and she found herself at last inside, confronted by more constables and an inspector. They were all smiling. She dived in her bag for credentials, but was instantly waved aside with fresh humour.

"We don't ask any questions, and it's best to give no answers," she was told pleasantly, as they took her across an empty ante-room that seemed unnecessarily large, into a crowded court that was certainly unnecessarily small. It was all very still; the wit and the clamour and the sunshine outside seemed suddenly very far away.

Admitting freely that tradition and fact are at variance in most countries, one felt that the little judgment hall, with its want of space, of sunlight, of air and sound and all the things that matter, was strangely at war with the accepted notion of the publicity of British justice. The British public was there, it is true—a dozen strong, perhaps, very self-conscious, and eaten up with pride at having succeeded in getting past the constable at the door. But it was a distinctly exclusive, not to say private, sort of public.

One forgot all this, however, when the magistrate came in and began to hear the cases. There were a good many, and they were heard with extraordinary rapidity. I suppose the offenders knew beforehand what they were charged with—an advantage they sometimes had over the magistrate when he mixed up the charge sheets. But the British public, jammed together on the one bench reserved for it, could

only gather occasionally why this or that person was fined or sent to prison or remanded. One thing could be clearly deduced from the progress of that heart-breaking procession of human failures, as they passed, generally in hopeless silence, from the greyness of the police court to the more complete greyness beyond. They were all people who had snatched desperately at the air for some of the colour of life, and had succumbed helplessly before they found it.

No court of justice could help them. You could not expect a magistrate, faced with something like forty cases, to stop and consider the terrible monotony of existence that had driven the little scullery-maid to be "drunk and disorderly," or the poor clerk to steal his employer's money, thinking to steal his happiness with it; or the lad with the jolly fearless face to beg in the streets because he was "out of work"—at fifteen!—or the boy, whose eyes were swollen with crying, to be so unmanageable that his father had to bring him to a place where no child should be, at an age when, in happier circumstances, he would be just starting for Eton with a prospect before him of unlimited opportunities for "ragging." The magistrate was not unkind; nobody was unkind. All the prisoners were scrupulously asked if they had anything to say, if they would like to call a witness. Anything to

say! You might as well try to discharge a mountain torrent through a bath tap. As for witnesses, a bewildered woman, convicted of drunkenness because she had been found lying unconscious on the pavement, could not be expected under the circumstances to have secured a witness to prove her contention that she was merely faint. One by one, they all shook their heads mutely, and went away to prison while the sun shone.

Then the remand prisoners, the women who had thronged the doorstep in the early morning, who were there to answer for their rebellious manner of demanding a human and a political right, were brought into the dock by ones and twos; and there crept a change, a subtle change, into the musty atmosphere of ages. The court was still bathed in its queer half light. There was the same feeling in it of spectral unreality. You knew even more certainly than before that the machinery of the little judgment hall was entirely inadequate to deal with the prisoners in the dock. But the hopelessness of the whole thing was gone. These were not people whose spirit had been driven out of them by monotony and bad luck, as it had been driven out of the derelicts who stood in the dock before them. These were not people who were going to give in before they had won from life what

they demanded from it. It may be a perilous business to hunt down the colour of life for other people; but it is a less hopeless kind of job than hunting it down for yourself.

The great British public, represented by the handful of spectators who had evaded the censorship of the constable at the door, might, without cudgelling its brains unduly, have found some connection between the dreary convictions it had just witnessed, between the clumsy if kindly handling of habitual offenders, and this passage through the dock of imperturbably serene young women who, by the grace of God and the aid of a good cause, did not belong to the criminal classes. It might even have discovered that the one set of offenders had brought the other after it, into a police court on a summer morning.

There was the same rapidity in hearing the cases, the same courteous farce of asking for questions that could only be answered outside the police court, and then, perhaps, only once in a hundred years or so. And there was the same unimaginative treatment of those who thought it worth while to accept the invitation to speak.

"Have you anything to say?" came the regulation enquiry, hallowed by centuries of official belief in

the innocence of unconvicted prisoners who yet felt their cases to be prejudged. Then, as the woman in the dock showed every indication of having a great deal to say, this would be followed up with a hasty "Yes, yes; but I have nothing to do with that. I am here to administer the law as it stands."

So the law was administered as it stood; and the colour of life still flickered elusive beyond the grasp of all of us, as thirteen more offenders, a rebel woman every one of them, went away to prison while the sun shone.

III
Shaking Hands with the Middle Ages

"Going to be a good meeting, don't you think?" chatted one of the men wearing a steward's button to a woman dressed in black, who sat in the front row of the little block of seats reserved for ladies, just below the platform.

She gave an indifferent glance round the hall.

"Yes," she acquiesced; "I suppose it is. I've never been to a political meeting before."

"Really?" said the steward blandly. "Quite an experience for you, then, with a Cabinet Minister coming!"

He hurried away, unaware of the touch of condescension that had jarred indescribably, and spoke in an eager undertone to a large stout gentleman who was inspecting tickets at the ladies' entrance.

"It's all right," he said officiously. "I've just been talking to her. She isn't one of them."

The stout gentleman looked over his shoulder. "Who? That one next my wife? Oh, no! She's not their sort. Besides, they all wear green or purple, or both. I'm up to their dodges by this time—just had to turn away quite a nice little girl in a green hat——"

"My sister!" observed the other. "Oh, it don't matter; I let her in by the side door, and it won't do her any harm. They've got so out of hand, some of these canvassers, since the general election."

The large steward observed with an indulgent smile that one must make allowances. He did not say for what or for whom, but his meaning seemed to be clear to the other steward.

"The eternal feminine, eh?" he remarked with a knowing nod; and all the men standing round laughed immoderately. Under cover of this exhibition of humour, a girl in grey, with a fur cap and muff,

was allowed to pass in without any special scrutiny. She moved very deliberately along the front chairs, which were now filled, stood for an instant facing the audience while she selected her seat, then made her way to one in the middle of a row.

"Votes for women!" piped a wit in the gallery, reproducing the popular impression of the feminine voice; and the audience, strung up to the point of snatching at any outlet for emotion, rocked with mirth.

The girl in grey joined in the laughter. "Every one seems very jumpy to-night," she observed to her neighbour, a lady in tight black satin who wore the badge of some Women's Federation. "I was actually taken for a Suffragette in the market-place just now."

"Were you, now?" returned the lady, sociably. "No wonder they're a trifle apprehensive after the way those dreadful creatures went on at the Corn Exchange, last week. You were there, perhaps?"

The girl in grey said she was there, and the Federation woman proceeded to converse genially. "Thought I'd seen your face somewhere," she said. "A splendid gathering, that would have been a glorious triumph for the Party, if it hadn't been for those——" She paused for a word, and found it with satisfac-

tion—"females. Females," she repeated distinctly. "You really can't call them anything else."

"I suppose you can't," said the girl demurely. The sparkle lit up her eyes again. "Our minister called them bipeds, in the pulpit, last Sunday," she added.

"And so they are!" cried the lady in tight black satin. "So they are."

"They are," agreed the girl in grey.

In the front row of chairs, speculation was rife as to the possible presence of Suffragettes. The wife of the man at the door, a homely little woman with a pleasant face, was assuring everybody who cared to know that the thing was impossible.

"They've drafted five hundred police into the town, I'm told; and my husband arranged for thirty extra stewards at the last minute, because the detectives wired that two of them had travelled down in the London train," she informed a circle of interested listeners.

"Is that why there are so many men wearing little buttons?" asked the woman on her left. "I wondered if that was usual at political meetings."

"I think I heard you say you'd never been to a meeting before, didn't I?" said her neighbour pleasantly. "Neither have I, and I wouldn't be wasting my time here to-night if it wasn't to please my husband. He likes to see women take an interest in politics; it was him that got our member a hundred and twenty-eight canvassers, last election. Oh, he thinks a lot of women, does my husband; says he hasn't any objection to their having a vote, either, only they ought to be ashamed of themselves for going on so about it. I don't hold with votes myself. It's only men that's got all that idle time on their hands, and if they're respectable married men, there's nothing else to occupy them but politics. But for a woman it's work, work, work, from her wedding-day till her funeral, and how can she find time for such nonsense? 'You've got to be made to think, Martha,' he says to me, coming here to-night. Think? If a woman stops to think, she don't stop with her husband, chances are. Of course, he don't believe me when I say that. He's too sure of me, that's where it is."

"That is always where it is," said the woman in black, quietly.

Her neighbour took out some knitting. "They laugh at me for bringing my knitting everywhere," she said.

"I can't listen if I sit idle. Not that I want to listen," she concluded, as she settled down comfortably to the counting of stitches.

The organ boomed out a jerky tune with elephantine lightness, and the audience vented its impatience in a lusty rendering of some song about England and liberty. The music was uninspiring, the words were clap-trap, and seemed to convey the singular idea that freedom had been invented and patented within recent years by a particular political party; but the indifferent expression of the woman in black changed and softened as the chorus rose and fell, and a tall man with a lean, humorous face, who stood looking at her, gave her a smile of understanding as the echoing sounds died away. He too was wearing a steward's button, she noticed.

"There's a sort of barbaric splendour about that, isn't there?" he remarked.

She felt none of the irritation that had been roused by the conversational advances of the other steward. It was a relief, indeed, to talk about something ordinary with a man who, she felt instinctively, knew how to give even ordinary things their true values.

"It's the whole effect," she answered impulsively.

"The cathedral outside, and this thirteenth-century interior, and then—this!" She looked round the magnificent old County Hall, and along the densely packed rows of restless modern men and women, and then back again, half whimsically, at the man who had spoken to her. "It is like reaching back to shake hands with the Middle Ages," she said.

"To fight with the Middle Ages," he amended, and they both laughed. "You will find," he added, narrowing his eyes a little to look at her, "that the Middle Ages generally win, when we hold political meetings here in the provinces."

There was a distant sound of cheering, and every one stiffened into attention. A stir ran round the hall; doors were closed with a good deal of noise, and the stewards, looking apprehensively at the little block of seats in the front, gradually closed round them until the gangways were entirely blocked at that end of the hall. One lady, who complained that she could not see the platform for stewards, instantly found herself placed under observation, and was only freed from suspicion when one of the gentlemen identified her as his aunt and pledged his word that she did not want a Parliamentary vote. Her neighbours congratulated her, but in accents that betrayed disappointment.

The stir was followed by an expectant hush. The tall man looked steadily at the fingers of the woman in black, which locked and unlocked ceaselessly, though she leaned back in her chair with a vast assumption of unconcern. Those tireless, nervous hands told him what he wanted to know.

The little officious steward was back at his side, whispering in his ear. He shook his head impatiently in reply.

"I'm not going to stay," he said shortly. "You've got enough without me, even to deal with two Suffragettes who may not be here; and—well, it's a sickening business, and I'd sooner be out of it."

He went, and all that was of her world seemed to the woman in black to go with him, as she looked after him, half disappointed, half contemptuous. Up to this point, the Middle Ages were certainly winning, she decided.

The next quarter of an hour was the longest she had ever lived through. Afterwards, looking back, she remembered every detail of what took place, all the impressiveness of it, all the ironic absurdity. At the time, it felt like holding one's breath for interminable minutes while unfamiliar things went on

somewhere in the thick of a mist, as things happen in a bad dream that just escapes the final incoherence of a nightmare.

There was the roar that broke through the mist in a huge wave of sound, when the speakers walked on to the platform. Looking round at that swaying, white-faced multitude, mad with a hero-worship that lost not a jot of its attraction in her eyes because for her there was no hero, the woman in the front row, who had never been to a political meeting before, felt a moment's amazement at her own temerity in coming there, alone with one other, to defy an enthusiasm that had all the appearance of invincibility. Then the mist began to roll away, as somebody started the usual popular chorus. Translated in terms of jolly good-fellowship, hero-worship no longer appeared unconquerable.

To the woman in black it seemed as though a thousand chairs scraped, a thousand throats grated, while the audience settled down, and the chairman delivered carefully prepared compliments, and the great man sorted slips of paper. Then two women, out of the hundred or so who had been admitted because they did not appear to want the historic liberties they came to applaud, clenched lips and hands as the roar burst out once more.

The great man was on his feet, facing it with a gratified smile. To one at least of his audience that smile restored a courage that was in full flight the minute before. That he should strike so egregiously the wrong note, that a fine situation should be met with affability, argued something wrong with the situation or something wrong with the man. There was a false note, too, in that second roar, and it stopped so unexpectedly that one man was left cheering alone in a high, falsetto voice, provocative of instant derision. The fineness had gone out of the situation, and the immediate future of the woman in black, full as it was of unfamiliar fears, came back into some sort of a line with the present.

The absolute silence that greeted the opening period of the ministerial oration had something abnormal in it. It was a silence that almost hurt. The smallest movement put stewards on the alert, made heads go round. The speaker felt the strain, shuffled his notes, stumbled once or twice. Yet, as the tension tightened to breaking-point, the woman in the front row knew the grip over her own nerves to be strengthening by minutes. In the mental commotion around her, she felt the battle already half won that she had come to fight.

A man's voice, challenging a fact, caused a sensation of relief out of all proportion to the slightness of the interruption. Some wag said amiably, "Turn him out!" and there was laughter. The man, a well-known local Socialist, repeated his objection, and was supported this time by several other voices. There was quite a little stir, and the great man put out his hand benevolently.

"No, no, gentlemen, let him stay!" he adjured the stewards, none of whom had shown one sign of wishing to do otherwise. "I stand here as the champion of free speech——"

The rest of his sentence was drowned in a spontaneous outburst of applause, during which it was to be supposed that he dealt with the objection that had been raised, for when his words again became audible he had gone on to another point. His next interrupter was a Tariff Reformer, at whose expense he was courteously humorous. The emotional audience rewarded him with appreciative laughter, in which the Tariff Reformer joined good-humouredly. Speaker and listeners were rapidly coming into touch with one another.

The great man, growing sure of his ground, made an eloquent appeal to the records of the past. The

woman, who had never heard a politician speak before, leaned forward, hanging on every word. She felt strangely elated, strangely sure of herself, now. This man, believing all that about liberty, seeing all that behind the commonplace of democracy, should surely understand where others had failed even to tolerate. She felt disproportionately irritated by the click of knitting-needles, wondering how any woman could occupy mind and fingers with wool while eternal principles of justice were being thundered over her head. Then there came a pause in the thunder; and sight and sound were blotted out as she took the opportunity, rose to her feet, and stared up blindly at the spot where she knew the speaker to be standing.

"Then give all that to the women," she said, in a voice she never seemed to have heard before. "If you think so much of justice and freedom for men, don't keep it any longer from the women."

For a little space of time, a couple of seconds, probably, her eyes went on seeing nothing, and her ears drummed. She thought she had never known what it really meant to be alone until that moment. She was a woman who had known loneliness very early, when it came to her in an uncongenial nursery; she knew it still, in some houses, where everything was wrong,

from the wall-papers to the people. But the meaning of utter isolation she had never learnt until that moment when clamour and confusion reigned around her and she saw and heard none of it.

Then her senses were invaded by the sound and the look of it all; and to her own perplexity she found herself on the point of smiling.

She thought of a hundred things, many of them irrelevant, as she tried in vain to walk to the door, and was obstructed at every step by stewards, who fought to get hold of some part of her in their curious method of restoring order and decorum. She wondered why the meeting was interrupting itself with such complete success, because one woman had made the mistake of thinking that the hero they had welcomed with bad music was a man who meant what he said. She thought of plays she had seen, dealing with the French Revolution, very bad plays most of them, she reminded herself as she was dragged this way and that by excited gentlemen, divided in opinion as to the door by which she was to be ejected. The sea of distorted faces past which they took her, the memory of the knitting-needles, even the intolerable smile of the great man as he made little jokes about her for the amusement of the platform—all this was very

suggestive of the French Revolution, as portrayed in a badly written play. In all the plays she had seen, however, she did not remember that there had ever been women who cried a little, or men who sat silent and ashamed, yet not sufficiently ashamed to put a stop to what was going on. These two things appeared to be really happening, here and there among the audience; and she supposed this was why they hurt the most.

She thought of the fastidiousness that made her a jest to her friends, as she felt her hat knocked sideways, looked down and saw the lace at her wrists dangling in rags. The blow that some one aimed at her, as she was dragged unresisting by, seemed a little thing in comparison with those torn strips of lace. Apparently, she was not alone in this eccentric adjustment of proportions; for the little fussy steward who, unbalanced to the point of irresponsibility, had struck the blow, was apologizing clumsily the next minute for treading on her skirt. He did not seem to understand when she told him gently that he was the man who had boasted of protecting women since the world began.

Sky and stars looked very remote when at last by circuitous ways they brought her to a door and thrust

her out into the night. A final push from the gentleman who liked to see women take an interest in politics, sent her stumbling down stone steps into a moonlit market-place. Everything looked very big, very still, out there, after the banality and the bad staging of the play from which she had just made her unrehearsed exit. In the clearness of thought that came to her, freed at last of hands that dragged at her and voices that coarsened to say things to her that she only now dimly began to comprehend, she knew what it was that had made women, ordinary quiet women like herself, into rebels who were out to fight for the right to protect themselves even against their protectors.

A cheer greeted her from the farther side of the market-place, where the police kept back a crowd that had waited all the evening to see the two Suffragettes from London, and not, as the local paper afterwards somewhat flamboyantly put it, to "worship from afar the apostle of progress and democracy, almost as the servants of the gods might wait at Olympic banquets for crumbs to fall from the rich man's table." It was a friendly cheer, she noticed, though this did not matter much. Nothing seemed to matter much, just then, except that the black mass of the cathedral towered overhead and looked unshakable.

A little altercation floated down to her from the top of the steps, as she leaned motionless against the worn stones of the old balustrade.

"Martha! You of all people! Disgracing me like that! However did you come to be mistaken for one of those screaming——?"

"Well, I couldn't stand the humbug of it, there! Talking about free speech and all that fal-lal nonsense, and then——! I wouldn't let my cat be treated as they treated her, all for nothing——"

"Nothing, do you call it? Coming here on purpose to interrupt——"

"So did that ranting Socialist you think so much of! So did Mr. What's-his-name with the husky voice. Why didn't they tear *them* to pieces? Now, you listen to me, James. You brought me here to-night because you said I'd got to be made to think. Very well. I've been made. If you don't like it, you should ha' let me stay at home, as I wanted to."

She stuffed a mass of dropped stitches into a torn work-bag, and went down the steps, her chin in the air. "If that's politics," she called back to him from the pavement, "then it's time women got the vote, if it's only to put a stop to them!"

The girl in grey came round the corner of the building and joined her comrade, who still waited in the shadow cast by the cathedral. Her muff was gone, her cap lopped over one eye, and she held her hand to her throat where the collar had been wrenched at; but her eyes shone with their unalterable courage and spirit. She knew better than any one that every skirmish in the battle they were out to fight was always won before a single blow was struck.

"All right, are you? You did splendidly, for a first shot! Come along to the Martyrs' Cross; the police say we may hold a meeting there. Oh, I know you never have, but you can come and try. Any *idiot* can speak after being chucked out of a Cabinet Minister's meeting!"

Encouraged by this quaint process of exhaustion to regard herself as an orator, the woman who had never been to a political meeting till she went to be thrown out of one, walked across the market-place to shake hands with the Middle Ages on a spot where men and women were made to die, centuries ago, for having been born too soon.

She found the girl in grey cheerfully assuring an interested crowd that she stood there as the champion of free speech.

IV
Filling the War Chest

As a passer-by, I had known that spot in a busy street all my life; or rather, I thought I knew it. It was only when I took my courage in both hands and a money-box in one of them, and went to stand there every day for a week, that I discovered how wide a gulf it is that separates the passer-by from those who are passed by.

It was all right as long as the sun shone and sent charming side-lights across the bunches of colour in the flower-lady's basket, and put gay and human feelings into the heart of the public so that it lingered and bought daffodils and pink newspapers and ephemer-

al air-balls from my companions of the gutter, and even sometimes gave me a coin as well as an amused smile. One liked it almost as well when the wind blew up unimportant showers, so hurriedly and unexpectedly that the rain seemed almost out of breath when it came; for this turned the bit of western sky that blocked the end of the street into a fine country sky, that ought to have swept across a moor instead of scudding past a London Tube station. But when it snowed, or rained long and uncompromisingly, and when the wind blew swift and cold without blowing up anything interesting with it, there were no street effects and no smiles, and the public shut its impressionable heart against colour and pink news and polemics, and everything else we were hawking; and one learned suddenly the meaning of being passed by. Perhaps it was worth learning—one of those odd, disagreeable experiences that are worth gathering up by the way when you stand on the edge of a London pavement, helping to fill a war chest for rebel women. Certainly I might not otherwise have reached the heart of my fellows in the gutter.

"It's a 'ard life, ain't it?" said the flower-lady sympathetically. I had known her in the past, too—the past that seemed so long ago and yet dated back only to last week—had sometimes bought flowers of her

because she looked cold, and had generally found her unprepossessing and much inclined to grumble. I thought I knew now, as I stamped my feet to keep warm, and shook my box invitingly in front of cold and distant people who refused to be invited, how very much she might have had to grumble at. The queer part of it was that she was not grumbling now; she had ceased to grumble, in fact, for the very reason that made me understand for the first time why she should grumble. Standing there beside her, in God's rain that knew no respect of persons, I was no longer a client out of whom another penny might with tact be wheedled; I was just a boon companion, bent like herself on wheedling that penny from a miserly public that eternally hurried by. So she gave me her pity, though I wore a fur coat and she only a threadbare shawl, and the same biting wind bit at us both.

The newspaper sellers at first held aloof; so did the girl who sold air-balls.

"I haven't took a bloomin' copper all the afternoon," she complained, looking pointedly after the lady who had just dropped a shilling in my box. I considered the wisdom of explaining that what I was doing was going to help her in the long run, but decided that under similar circumstances I should prefer a more

practical and immediate evidence of good-will from any one who offered me such an explanation. For the worst of the long run, mean this what it may, is that it never, never runs.

Luckily for our future relations, a gust of wind carried off a blue air-ball, and in the chase that followed I came off victorious, and was able to hand it to the owner with a disarming smile. She unbent slightly in return.

"Dessay you find it chilly out here, not bein' used to it," she suggested, pulling the knot in the string tighter with her teeth.

"What are they doin' it for? That's what I arst! What are they doin' it for?" said the lame newsboy in a slightly peevish tone.

My agility in capturing the air-ball had made him sore, I think, though he had no reason to feel any envy on that score. Seeing the alertness and speed with which he dragged his useless limb after him when he came to show me anything uncomplimentary about the Suffragettes that happened to appear in his pink newspaper, I could but marvel at the thought of what he might have accomplished on two legs. One could only suppose that his agility, like the flower-lady's

sympathy, was the result of a lifelong evasion of difficulties.

The elderly gentleman who sold the penny Conservative paper knew why we were doing it. He never failed to wink joyously to his friends if a male elector stopped to argue across my money-box about the cause for which I was shaking it.

"Doin' it to git theirselves 'usbands, that's what they're doin' it for," he would say conclusively, in denial of the usual contention of the anti-suffragist, that we are doing it because of our distaste for husbands.

When the enemy attacked, my fellow-hawkers waited with grim anticipation for my replies.

"Is not this a terrible condescension on your part?" asked one disapproving lady, putting up her lorgnette to read the inscription on the box. "Oh, I quite believe in your cause, but why do this sort of thing? How much better to get round the men another way!"

She looked gently pained when I explained rather obviously that I should consider that a condescension, and so would the right sort of man; and my companions looked with puzzled eyes after the retreating lady who seemed to belong to a strange world out of their ken, in which helplessness had a

market value. It was pleasantly illuminating to find, however, as the week wore on, that they had come to accept me as an equal, not because I could hold my own against the passer-by, but because they saw me, like themselves, exposed to all the discomforts of being passed by. That, I am sure, is why the elderly paper-seller gave me so much friendly information about goloshes, and why the lame boy observed so sympathetically, one wet evening, that I had had a quiet day.

"Yes; nice and quiet, wasn't it?" I answered gladly, being a militant suffragist of many and strenuous experiences that would not generally be called either nice or quiet. It was only when I caught his astonished expression that I understood him to be referring, not to political passions, but to trade.

Even when you are filling the war chest at the edge of the pavement it is not impossible, I find, to spare a little pity for those who pass as well as for those who are passed by. "*L'homme oisif tue le temps; le temps tue l'homme oisif*," as it is expressed by the nation that knows better than any other, possibly, how to kill time gracefully. Time seemed to be killing a good many idle people, I thought, during the week of days that I stood outside that Tube station. The habitual

hawker, of course, was a loiterer by profession; so was the friendly constable who remarked, "Well, you ladies do have to face somethink, you do!" referring, I imagine, to the snow, which was soft and soothing compared to some of the street witticisms I had to face in the course of business. The real waster was rather the person who stood at the entrance of the station, sometimes for hours, waiting, not for something to happen, or even in most cases for somebody to come, but just waiting.

Sometimes the idler was a man. For one whole afternoon it was a man with a pale and purposeless blue eye that stamped him at once as being one of those who, in killing time, are being gradually killed by it. He said something about the weather to the policeman, something about the winners to the boy who sold pink information about winners; but he did not spend a halfpenny on the information, nor did he look as though he had spent a halfpenny on information in the whole of his life. Even when a motor-car broke down opposite, he did not cross the road to look at it. You have to be really interested in life, I suppose, to form one of a street crowd.

Most of the women loiterers seemed to be the victims, either of their small unearned incomes, or of

somebody else's unpunctuality. One of these, after stamping her feet in unison with mine for more than half an hour, asked me if I had seen a lady in a green hat. I think I had seen hundreds, which was not very helpful; but the enquiry made an opening, and I shook my box gently and seductively in her direction. She was quite affable, told me she had believed in woman suffrage all her life, and thought it an excellent idea for other people to stand out in the rain collecting money for it.

"It gives you a pinched look, and then people throw you something before they see what it is for," she added genially.

Evidently my complexion had not taken her unawares in this way, for she made no effort to support the cause in which she had believed all her life. She had so many claims, she said. I understood what she meant when one of the claims, wearing a mountainous hat in emerald-green straw, bore down upon her with torrential apologies for being late, and carried her off to the shops.

"It's for something to do up my every-evening black, and you have such a good eye for colour," was the cryptic remark I overheard, as they went. In about half an hour they were back again, and the girl in the

green mountain was dropping two-pence in my box. She smiled rather nicely, and on a sudden impulse I asked her what she had bought for the every-evening black.

She stared, laughed a little, and ended on a sigh. "Nothing," she confessed. "Isn't it tragic?"

"It must be," I tried to agree. I suppose I succeeded in sounding a human note, for she still lingered.

"I hope you'll get your vote soon, and not have to go on wasting your time like this," she said.

"It isn't my vote particularly, or my waste of time," I called after her. But she was gone, her ridiculous hat bobbing up and down in the crowd like a Chinese lantern on a stick; and I wondered if she would some day make a truce with time and save her soul alive.

Time, though a deadly murderer, does not succeed in killing all the people who are trying so hard to kill him; and hope, even for a serious cause, lurked sometimes in that stream of bored and idle passers-by, who seemed so bent on cheating their nature out of everything it demanded of them. It was always a pleasant shock when women and girls, wearing the most preposterous hats and the most fearsome

of purple-spotted veils, slid something into my hand and hurried on, trying to look as if they had done nothing of the kind. And my knowledge of things human played me entirely false over the expensive dowager in sable and velvet.

She had stood in front of the nearest shop window for some minutes, discussing with a patient companion the rival qualities of jet trimming and gold braid. "Jet lasts," she observed ponderously.

"It does last," agreed the companion.

"Perhaps that gold edging would look handsomer," proceeded the old lady, assailed by sudden doubts.

"Oh, yes, it might," said the companion hastily, adapting her tone.

"You are looking at the wrong one," said the old lady bluntly. "It isn't likely I should put a four-three edging on my best satin between-wrap." Then she veered round and saw me.

Naturally I expected something very cutting, the more so that a kindly supporter threw me a shilling just then from the top of an omnibus, and a money-box not being so handy as a tambourine, I spent the next few seconds grovelling in the snow at the

lady's feet. When I came up again, successful but apprehensive, I found her smiling blandly.

"If I were ten years younger I should be out in the street fighting with you," was the astonishing remark that accompanied a handsome donation to the war chest.

"Do come, all the same," I urged, caught by the lightning gleam in her little grey eye. But she shook her head and returned to the jet and the gold edging—a wicked waste of a warlike grey eye!

So the week drew to an end, and I was no longer to be numbered among those who are passed by at the edge of the pavement. In my foolishness I thought it would be easy to remain on friendly terms with my fellow-hawkers of yesterday; and with that idea in my mind I took an early opportunity of returning to the spot and buying a halfpenny pink paper and a penny white paper and a blue air-ball and a bunch of daffodils.

I met with a chilly civility from them all, with the exception of the flower lady, who shamelessly overcharged me for the daffodils.

"Yes, lady, they are dear this morning; cost me

that in the market, they did—thank you, lady, much obliged, I'm sure. Yes, it is cold for a body, sitting out here all day."

That was all—from the friend and sister who had almost offered me her shawl, a week ago, because she saw me shivering.

The sun was shining, and the snow had gone, and I suppose the patch of sky at the western end of the street was all right. But I had been put back in my place as a passer-by; and neither sun nor sky belonged to me any longer.

V
The Conversion of Penelope's Mother

"In converting the heathen," I told Penelope, "never make the mistake of converting your friends. There is nothing so unconquerable as the immortal grudge that your friend owes you for having had the impertinence to interfere with his opinions. You see, friendship, being a rare and elusive and provoking condition of the soul, has nothing to do with opinions. It matters what your casual acquaintance thinks about the subject of the hour, because you have to talk with him. It doesn't matter in the least what your friend

thinks, because there is no conversation among friends, there is only intercourse, which has nothing to do with opinions. Naturally, I am not talking of eternal truths, because if your friend does not see eye to eye with you about those, no friendship is possible. One never converts people to eternal truths, only to the particular manifestation of these that is being revealed to the age through which we are passing."

"According to that," objected Penelope, "there is no possibility of converting people to anything, unless they are already converted without knowing it."

"Exactly," I said. "That is why it is waste of time as well as impertinence to convert the person who is your friend. And as your mother is one of the few mothers I know who is also a friend to her children, I strongly advise you not to——"

"That is all very well," again objected Penelope; "but mother has not yet discovered that she is converted to the particular manifestation of eternal truth known as Votes for Women; and, to put it plainly, you can't go on living with some one who thinks all suffragists are hooligans, when you are one of the hooligans."

"Theoretically," I argued, "you could, if——"

"But I don't live with mother theoretically," interrupted Penelope; "and if you seriously mean that you cannot convert her because of the immortal grudge she would owe you for doing it, I suppose I shall have to take that risk myself. It is not at all easy to convert an old lady to eternal truth at the mouth of an ear-trumpet," she added insinuatingly.

In the end I was persuaded to undertake the conversion, being no wiser than other apostles of great movements who have bartered friendships for causes since the world began; and Sarah's greeting, when she opened the door to me the day I called upon Penelope's mother by appointment, was therefore disconcerting.

"Miss Penelope said, would you please wait in the back drawing-room till she's finished converting the mistress," said Sarah in the impassive tone of one whom no message, however strange, could disconcert. "It's the Suffragettics, I think," she added for my enlightenment. To Sarah all manifestations of the eternal truths rest on the level of rheumatics and other mortal infirmities.

I suggested that, folding-doors not being soundproof, I had better wait downstairs. Sarah led the way up to the back drawing-room without giving this proposal a moment's serious consideration.

"You can hear anything that's said to the mistress from the top of the house to the bottom—that is, if the mistress can hear it," she explained unemotionally.

The controversy had reached the acute stage when I arrived in the back drawing-room, an unwilling eavesdropper. This I gathered from the significant circumstance that both speakers were talking at once. Presently there came a calm, in the course of which Penelope seemed to be getting on rather well. She was keeping her temper wonderfully, I thought, and was apparently convincing the enemy beyond the power of retort. The absence of retort became, indeed, astonishing, until it was explained by a sudden interruption from Penelope's mother, just as her daughter reached a fine pitch of persuasive eloquence.

"I can't hear a word you are saying, my dear. I wish you would pick up my ear-trumpet," said Penelope's mother, breaking unconsciously into the middle of a sentence.

Evidently the ear-trumpet was found and adjusted, for retorts came thick and fast as soon as Penelope began patiently to say it all over again.

"What rubbish, child!" was an early interruption.

"I have never done anything to hinder your development, as you call it. I drew the line at ju-jitsu, I admit, because I didn't like the appearance of the unpleasant little yellow person with the pigtail—he had no pigtail? Well, he was the style of person to whom one expects to find a pigtail attached. That is neither here nor there—"

"No, mother darling, it isn't," interposed Penelope firmly; "and I never said you hindered my development. We are not Suffragettes because we have personal grievances, but because of the general attitude towards women——"

"You will never persuade me, my dear, that you can cure anybody's attitude towards women by knocking off policemen's helmets——"

"We don't knock off——"

"I am convinced, Penelope, that I have seen a picture, in the *Daily Illustrated*, I think it was, of a woman knocking off a policeman's helmet. Her mouth was wide open, and she was doing it with an umbrella—a dreadful, ill-bred, unwomanly creature she looked! I remember it distinctly. The *Daily Illustrated* is a most respectable paper; it would never——"

"Darling, you know you have told me over and over again how all the respectable papers of the day called Florence Nightingale a dreadful, unwomanly creature for wanting to go out to the war to nurse grown-up men without a chaperon, instead of staying at home to nurse the baby she hadn't got," shouted Penelope down the ear-trumpet.

"And so they did," cried her mother, as though her veracity were being called in question. "All sorts of wicked and untrue things were said about that noble woman, for whom I have the utmost veneration, because she taught me to air a room by opening the window a few minutes at the bottom instead of opening the door. Oh! it was shocking the things they said about her! But now——"

"Now," said the wily Penelope, "no woman in England is more honoured. That shows, doesn't it, that we should not believe everything the papers——"

"Penelope," said her mother abruptly, "I have dropped my ear-trumpet again, so you had better ring the bell for tea."

Signs of the fray were still evident when Sarah admitted me to the front drawing-room. The ear-trumpet was sticking out of the coal-box, always a sign

of mental disturbance in Penelope's home; and both she and her mother were looking for the spectacles which had been swept momentarily out of existence.

"I cannot think what I did with them," complained Penelope's mother, as though her loss were not an hourly occurrence. "If you had not upset me so dreadfully, Penelope——"

Then she looked up and saw me, Sarah's lusty announcement of my name having passed over her unheeded through the temporary disablement of the ear-trumpet. With a royal gesture of her hand she banished eternal truths and their tiresome topical manifestations to oblivion, and received me in the grand manner that was designed, fifty years ago, to hide from visitors and servants alike that the head of the house ever had any private emotions or any public interests. Now, as then, it deceived nobody; but it bridged the gulf between eternal truths and afternoon tea very pleasantly.

"How charming of you to look in just as Penelope and I were going to have tea! Come and sit near me," was the gracious greeting I received. She turned a serene countenance towards Penelope, who was showing no inherited instinct for bridging impassable gulfs. "My dear, can you find my ear-trumpet? I am sure I had it a moment ago."

"You had," murmured the rebellious Penelope. "It might just as well have stayed in the coal-box the whole time, for all the good it was to either of us!"

It was only when, at the conclusion of a blameless discourse on ribbon embroidery, Penelope had been sent upstairs to look for a piece of needle-work, that Penelope's mother stopped being my Early Victorian hostess and became the mother of all the ages.

"I suppose," she said, with the true motherly mixture of appeal and disapproval in her tone, "it is you who have converted Penelope to all this nonsense."

"No," I said. "The age has converted her. Penelope is the child of the age."

"She has no business to be anybody's child but her mother's," was the indignant reply. "When I was a girl daughters were their mother's own children——"

I interrupted to ask if she really thought that this had ever been true. The ear-trumpet described furious circles in the air—another danger signal, as I knew from experience.

"When I was a girl," said Penelope's mother once more, "we had the good manners not to let our mothers guess that we knew more than they did—even if we did."

I asked a depressed Penelope, on the way downstairs, why she had not taken my advice and left me to risk my friendship with her mother, instead of imperilling her own?

"It was idiotic of me," confessed Penelope; "she said something unfair about 'those dreadful women,' so I had to say I was one of them; and after that I had to go on, naturally. But if I haven't converted mother in the drawing-room, I seem to have succeeded incidentally in converting cook in the kitchen. It's a pity there were not a few more Antis concealed about the house while I was at the ear-trumpet, isn't it?"

"Listen!" I interrupted.

Sarah was clearing away tea, and through the open drawing-room door came scraps of conversation.

"It is only right to study both sides of a question, Sarah."

"Yes'm."

"Florence Nightingale, the noblest Englishwoman who ever lived—I hope you open the window and not the door, when you wish to air your bedroom, Sarah?—Florence Nightingale was misrepresented just in the same way."

"Yes'm."

"I think I shall stop your monthly magazine and order a suffrage periodical for the kitchen instead."

"Yes'm. We have two of Miss Penelope's already. Thank you, ma'am."

Penelope and I fled downstairs to escape detection.

"She was converted all the time; I told you she would be," I remarked on the doorstep.

"Now for the immortal grudge!" sighed Penelope.

VI
At a Street Corner

"People of London!" faltered the lady who had just stepped upon the sugar-box at the edge of the pavement.

The people of London, who happened just then to be a very little girl carrying a very large baby, stared in some astonishment. Another lady, who had been distributing handbills farther along the street, came back and prompted the speaker encouragingly.

"Go on; that's splendid!" she said with friendly warmth.

The woman on the sugar-box, who had never stood on a sugar-box before, smiled wanly. "Why do they never have earthquakes except in countries where

people don't want them?" she sighed. Her friend being engaged at the moment in pressing a handbill upon the little girl, who obligingly gripped the baby with one hand and her chin in order to take it, there came no response to the appeal of the orator in the gutter; and she pulled herself together and made a fresh start.

"People of London!" she repeated amiably. "We have come here to tell you about 'Votes for——'"

"Why, it's these 'ere Suffra*gites*!" suddenly yelled the people of London, shifting the baby on to the other arm; and the debutante on the sugar-box broke down and laughed deprecatingly.

"I really must wait for some more people," she protested.

"You needn't," said her more experienced companion. "They always come along fast enough as soon as they see some one like you standing on a sugar-box."

"That doesn't surprise me," remarked the inexperienced one, thinking regretfully of a happy past in which the chief aim of a well-ordered life had been to avoid doing anything that would attract attention.

"Here they come," continued the lady with the

handbills. "Just keep them going while I get rid of these, there's a dear! It doesn't matter what you say," she added consolingly, as she went towards two approaching women with outstretched hand and an ingratiating smile.

"*Ah! ce sont les suffragettes!*" exclaimed one of these unexpectedly. "*Nous sommes des suffragistes françaises, nous aussi! Vive le féminisme!*"

"Oh, how perfectly delightful!" said the English suffragist, beaming on them. "Do stop and listen. *Nous allons avoir un*—oh, bother! What is 'meeting'?—*un rendez-vous, mesdames!*"

"*Tiens!*" gasped the French suffragists, as well they might.

At this moment the speaker, her mind a blank concerning all the carefully prepared sentences she had been learning by heart for days, could be heard announcing that she would now call upon the other lady to address the meeting; and the crowd, increasing every minute, cheered inconsequently.

"Well, there ain't much of her, but give 'er a chaunce!" remarked a wit, as the second speaker mounted the sugar-box.

A small boy hitched up his trousers and moved off. "I shall turn into a woman if I stay here," he observed.

"No such luck for you, my boy!" came the quick retort from the rickety platform, and the impressionable crowd grinned with appreciation.

The speaker pounced upon her opportunity and began to sketch the history of Reform. She used long words purposely, so they made an instant show of listening, it being out of the question, of course, to allow that any woman, least of all a Suffragette, could talk over their heads. The astonishing statement that women in the past had enjoyed a certain measure of political power, was, however, too much for one youth.

"Where did you git that from?" he shouted.

"My friend has forgotten his history," said the speaker indulgently. "It is an historical fact——"

The interrupter turned his back contemptuously on the sugar-box, and addressed the audience in a loud and overpowering voice.

"Look at 'er!" he adjured them, jerking his thumb over his shoulder. "History, she says! Believin' what she's towld in a book. Ain't that jest like a woman?"

Having thus disposed of the facts of history, he went on to deal more largely with the question as a whole. "Pack o' women!" he snorted. "Why don't they stay at 'ome and mind the baby? Why don't they cook the old man's dinner? Why don't they——?"

"This gentleman evidently thinks it is question time," struck in the real speaker with undisturbed composure. "Perhaps, when he reaches the age that will entitle him to use a vote, he will know more about the procedure of a political meeting——"

"Well, you ain't got a vote yourself, anyhow!" said the incensed youth, turning round amid the laughter of the crowd to face the woman on the sugar-box, which, of course, was exactly what she wanted him to do.

"Ah, I was wrong," she smiled back at him. "I see you do know something about the present political situation. If you will kindly keep your questions till I have finished speaking, I shall be very happy to——"

"Yuss!" agreed a supporter. "Stow it, Jim, till the lidy's had 'er say."

"But I don't want to hear no bloomin' Suffragette," grumbled the youth, angrily conscious that the crowd was no longer with him.

"Then git out!" advised the crowd; and the speaker's voice was drowned for a minute or so in the altercation that followed.

"What's it all about?" asked one woman of another, at the edge of the crowd.

The other, encircling a large bundle with her arms, shook her head.

"I dunno," she said; "but I loves to 'ear 'em talk."

The woman on the sugar-box was just giving the obvious reply to another interrupter, who wanted to know how a woman could find time to vote if she had a husband and six children to look after.

"How does a man find time to vote, if he has a wife and six children to support?" she demanded; and the woman with the bundle nodded approvingly.

"Now she's talkin' sense, and I likes sense," she remarked to her companion. "I don't 'old with women bein' Prime Ministers, but I likes sense."

The hostile youth, growing tired of being made the sport of the crowd, moved off with the remark that he would like "to see 'em all drowned"; and the speaker profited by a temporary lull and began to talk of eco-

nomics. She held her audience now without difficulty, telling them things about the labour market that they knew to be true; and a kind of tense hush was over the crowd round the sugar-box, when a well-dressed woman came strolling along the pavement on her way home from the Park.

"Why, I do believe that is a real live Suffragette! How chic!" she exclaimed with an amused smile.

The Suffragette caught the remark, and determined to catch the woman who made it. In a minute or two the amused smile was gone, and another comment floated up to the sugar-box.

"Jack, are you there? You must come and listen to this—you positively must! I—I had no idea they were like that!"

The woman in the French hat was won, but the crowd was again temporarily lost, and wild din reigned for the next few moments while supporters yelled for silence and opponents sang songs. At the first semblance of a pause, the Suffragette broke in again, the smile still predominating.

"I can see how anxious you are to help the Suffragettes," she said sweetly; and once more she carried

the joking, irresponsible crowd along with her. "You women who are here, come to our demonstration in Hyde Park next Sunday——"

"Hold on, young woman, who's going to cook the Sunday dinner for the kids?" interposed a voice.

"Your wife will cook it before she starts," was the ready rejoinder. "Or, better still, she can cook it overnight, and you can bring it with you and eat it in the Park——"

"What price roast pork and greens in Hyde Park?" demanded a sporting-looking gentleman in a terrific waistcoat.

"It won't hurt you to have cold pork and salad just for once," said the resourceful speaker. "Only think how the children will love a picnic, and a picnic like ours, too, with eighty women-speakers at the end of it! You know how dull picnics generally are when there is nothing more to eat——"

"Eighty of 'em! How about Holloway?" jeered the man in the waistcoat.

She turned on him swiftly. "If you had your vote taken from you to-morrow, wouldn't you have the

pluck to go to prison to get it back?" she asked, suddenly in deadly earnest.

Any crowd loves a fighter, and this one howled with delight. The lady in the French hat noticed that listening women, who had hitherto shown no open approval of what was said, nodded furtively and caught their breath when the speaker fired up in defence of women.

"Why, they go to prison because they like it, don't they?" observed the amused man who answered to the name of Jack. He had not intended this for an audible interruption, but nothing escaped the ear of the woman on the sugar-box.

"If you think a woman's ordinary life outside prison is as dreary as all that, don't you think it's time you gave her the power to improve her conditions, so that she needn't go to Holloway for a pleasant change?" she shot back at him, hot with scorn; and again listening women flushed with nervous pleasure. "Some of our comrades are coming out of prison next Saturday," the speaker went on rapidly; "and if you want to give them a welcome, as I know you do"—here she paused to allow time for yells of derision and references to skilly—"come and walk in our procession from Holloway gates."

"What! And be taken for gaol-birds too? Not much!" roared the man of sporting appearance.

"We'll come, miss; we'll be there!" suddenly called the woman with the bundle; and curiously enough, the crowd respected that and stopped jeering. But the speaker of a hundred open-air meetings, knowing her crowd better than it knew itself, saw that it had had enough, and called for questions. These were swiftly disposed of, being principally of the wash-tub order, already answered in her speech; and observing serenely that she concluded everybody was now converted, the Suffragette came down from her perch.

She and her companion were instantly swallowed up in the jostling, chattering crowd, and the well-dressed woman appealed to Jack.

"Do help them to get out of this," she said, clutching anxiously at his arm. "They'll be crushed to death, I know they will!"

"Eh, what? My dear girl, they're much better able to take care of themselves than I am," observed Jack tranquilly. "Besides, they're not being crushed to death. You couldn't crush a Suffragette if you tried."

A sudden swirl of the stream swept them face to

face with the two suffragists, who, still distributing handbills to right and left of them as they came, were composedly wedging a way for themselves through the dispersing people.

"I—I think you're splendid; and so does Jack!" cried their new supporter, flinging mere accuracy to the winds. "And I'm coming to Holloway Gates on Saturday and to Hyde Park on Sunday—and so is Jack!"

"Eh what?" said Jack mildly.

VII
The Crank of all the Ages

Votes for Women, price one penny!
Articles by Annie Kenney,
Mrs. Lawrence, Christabel,
Other Suffragettes as well.
Men and women, come and buy—
As you pass and hear the cry—
Votes for Women! here we sell
Articles by Christabel,
Mrs. Lawrence, Annie Kenney—
Votes for Women, price one penny!
(New Street Cries, 1909.)

I never knew until I became a regular newspaper seller, one day in every week, how many people there are in the world bent on reforming it. You do not discover this so long as you merely sell papers in a spas-

modic fashion, appearing on fine days at the edge of the pavement with a bundle of *Votes for Women* under your arm, and going off to tea as soon as these are sold out. Any element of amateurishness at once adds an air of detachment to the paper seller and keeps the world from really making friends with her. But as soon as the public grasps that she is a fixture, just as much so as the seller of pink football news or of green politics, except that her stock is renewed by a purple, white and green pony trap instead of by a panting boy on a bicycle, then every kind of crank who is out for an airing thinks she is there to listen to his views on every conceivable subject, from food reform up to simplicitarianism.

You divide the world into three kinds of people, roughly speaking, when you sell papers as a professional and not as an amateur. There is the person who wants to buy a paper. There is the person who wants to know where the nearest tea-shop is, or which omnibus goes to the Circus, or whether you have seen any one with pink wings—the last being a reference to millinery and not to aviation. This person really makes one feel like a professional newsboy at a street corner. Lastly, there is the crank. The crank does not want to buy a paper, or to seek information; he merely wants to talk. He leaves the ordinary newsvendor

in peace, recognizing that he is there merely for the purpose of selling news, whereas the seller of suffrage papers represents an attempt to reform the world as well. So her pitch becomes a common meeting-ground for cranks.

If it be true that the character of an age is to be found in the character of its cranks, the period we are passing through will present extraordinary difficulties to the chronicler of the future. That is the worst of living in an age when most of the big things have been established in theory, though some still remain to be established in fact. It was quite easy to be a crank with distinction when people tortured you for saying the world was round. Now, you have to fall back on rational dress or Swedish exercises, or a whole host of minor movements to educate public opinion, and the real crank has a hard struggle for existence. Personally, standing as I believe for one of the few big things that still have to be fought for because they are not yet established in fact, I have always felt inclined to look upon these lesser attempts to improve humanity as fads. But I find from standing at the edge of the pavement that the hall-mark of every crank is a firm belief that all the other cranks are only faddists.

"No," said the tailor-made lady with firmness, as she prepared to pass on after reading my newsbill; "I have no time for fads. Before I married, when I earned my own living and paid rates and taxes and—and gas, I quite believed in this sort of thing. In fact, I never condemn any woman for wanting a vote."

She seemed to think that she deserved some praise for this evidence of self-restraint; and I said something inane about thinking of other people. She looked injured.

"Naturally, I do not mean that I lead an idle or a selfish life," she said. "Sport, that is my strong point—outdoor sport." I suppose she gathered that this did not quite fill my conception of human usefulness, for she added hastily—"And charity. Sport and charity—that is my life."

"You could indulge in both, selling our paper," I said. I concluded from the haste with which she went away that she did not agree with me.

"Ah!" said the elderly gentleman, who excused himself quite unnecessarily for buying a paper by explaining that it was for his wife, "who is quite foolish about your question,"—"the great mistake you ladies make is in not concentrating upon the educational

test. You'd have thousands more on your side—myself, in fact—if you didn't want to flood the electorate with illiterate——"

An interruption occurred here, as the conductor of a waiting omnibus whistled to me for a paper and gave me his confidential opinion that we "were going to get it soon." The elderly gentleman turned triumphantly to the nearest newsboy.

"There! What did I say?" he demanded. "Socialists, every one of them! Socialists!"

The newsboy shrugged his shoulders as he looked after him, then turned and gave me a wink out of pure friendliness. "Chronic, ain't it?" he remarked.

Everything, by the way, is "chronic" to my companions in the paper-selling trade; and I have some difficulty in not letting the expression, whatever it may mean, creep into my vocabulary.

The temperance reformer was less easy to rout because he was so desperately in earnest. It was no use pointing out to him that we were both travelling along the same road, really. His was the one and only possible scheme for regenerating the world, and the women who actually wanted the power to help him were wilfully obstructing his path.

"Local option!" he repeated several times with enthusiasm, describing circles on the pavement with his umbrella and effectually keeping all possible customers at a distance. "Local option! That's the ticket. Votes for women, indeed!"

I said mildly that I supposed the reform of the goose was always the fad of the gander, and was sorry to see that he appeared hurt. "Of course," I added hurriedly, "I admit that I am the goose." He still looked offended, but the remark happily put him to flight after he had spoilt the newspaper trade at our corner for nearly ten minutes.

The most determined instance of the crank who sees all the rest of the world as faddists, or worse, is, I think, the animal faddist. Of course, we all advocate kindness to animals: but that is different from being a faddist about it. Still, I admit I am a little prejudice in the matter, owing to my encounter with the old lady, the toy dog, and the Kindness-to-pet-animals Christmas card.

She arrived breathless on the kerb at my side, having been placed there by a policeman, while criticism of the toy dog rained plentifully from a brewer's dray, a bicycle, and a taxicab, all of which were mixed up in the road through their noble endeavours not to anni-

hilate the yapping creature. I came into the situation because I unwound its chain, which had tied itself round the old lady's skirts, and placed the thing on her ermine muff. I received no acknowledgment of all this—first, because I picked him up by the head, seeing nothing else large enough to afford one a grip, and secondly, because she discovered I was a Suffragette.

"You ought to be locked up in a lunatic asylum," she said sternly.

For a moment I did not see the connection. Then I made allowances for her age and the peril she had just gone through and said—"Oh, no!" as soothingly as I could.

She put the dog with some difficulty inside her muff, tail first, which I felt was an indignity it scarcely deserved, even if it had dislocated the traffic. "When the world is full of tortured and suffering dumb animals!" she went on, glaring at the contents bill that fluttered from my hand.

I wished energetically that dumbness had been one of the disabilities of the particular tortured animal she was still trying to back into a hot ermine muff, for when I tried to say that my only objection to dumb

animals was that they were never dumb, my remark was drowned in piercing yelps.

At the end of ten minutes I had learnt every detail of her private and special society for protecting pampered pets against those who pampered them—this, by the way, was not what she called it—and of the dear little children who paid their pennies weekly, and of the Christmas card to advertise the cause, that she had designed herself. The Christmas card was extricated from the ermine muff, with no inconsiderable ingenuity, for the toy dog, making a wild dash for liberty, very nearly emerged with it; and my criticism was condescendingly invited. It is not easy to give an intelligent opinion on a drawing of a cat, a dog, a donkey, a parrot, a tadpole, a pony, a pigeon, and a newt; and I found I had said quite the wrong thing when I murmured that it was very pretty. Prettiness, I was told sternly, was not its object. I looked again, and was fortunately inspired to detect that she had not included a rabbit. She thought she might squeeze in the rabbit between the Newfoundland dog and the newt; and after that I forced my own goods upon her in a determined manner until she went.

It is sometimes helpful to remind yourself, if you are the crank who stands at a street corner selling pa-

pers for a cause, that cranks are the salt of the earth. But, as Henry Harland once wrote in a frivolous moment—"*Il faut souffrir pour être sel.*"

VIII
Patrolling the Gutter

"I suppose we had better start," faltered the tall woman in purple.

"I can't think of a reasonable excuse for delaying any longer," sighed the girl in green.

"Come along!" said a third, making a great show of the courage she did not feel.

Nobody came along. Under some pretext or another we still lingered, though there were ten of us and the space in our Suffragette shop was uncomfortably limited. Most people, the even tenor of whose lives had not been ruffled by the call of a great cause, might have thought the day an unpropitious one to

choose for patrolling the gutter, even for the sake of advertising a meeting of rebel women in the Albert Hall. A strong south-west wind, a real London drizzle overhead and thick mud underfoot, could hardly be held to offer striking attractions to a band of naturally timorous ladies, girt about with sandwich-boards, preparing to issue forth in procession into the conventional streets of Kensington. If we had been less timorous we should probably have postponed the expedition; but the last fear that rebel women ever learn to overcome is the fear of being thought afraid, so this was an alternative that did not suggest itself to anybody.

"I never realized before what it meant to be a belted knight, but I do now," remarked our literary member, trying in vain to free her hands from their cardboard bonds in order to straighten a crooked hat. "If anything or anybody were to unhorse us and make us bite the dust—isn't that what belted knights were always doing to one another in the Middle Ages?—we should have to lie on our backs, as they did, till some one came and picked us up."

"I feel like a pantomime super, myself," observed somebody else, twirling round in order to get a full-length back view of herself in the glass. "I shall never

get accustomed to the make-up," she added ruefully, as she once more swept the greater part of our stock of pamphlets from the counter to the floor, and had to stand helpless and repentant while the shop secretary picked them up, not for the first time in the course of these trial manœuvres.

"If you don't start soon, there will be nothing saleable left in the place," said the shop secretary pointedly.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" demanded the girl in green, trying to infuse a little real impatience into her tone.

"Courage," confessed the woman in purple, gloomily.

"Oh, nonsense!" said our literary member, without, however, moving any nearer to the door. "Think of George Herbert:

God gave thy soul brave wings; put not those feathers

Into a bed to sleep out all ill weathers."

We all tried to think of George Herbert, but without marked success.

"I can't think of anything but the ill weather waiting for us outside and all the people I know in Kensington," said the tall woman, voicing bluntly and concisely what the rest of us were feeling.

"Do you think the people we know would ever recognize us in these things?" asked some one in a moment of real inspiration; and under the influence of this new and cheering suggestion we formed up hastily in single file and really made a start.

The secretary of another local branch, who had dropped in to seek recruits for a similar poster parade in her district, observed significantly as we filed past her that it was most important to be as well dressed as possible in her neighbourhood. Neither this, nor the first comment that reached our ears as we plunged into the street, added particularly to our good opinion of ourselves.

"Well, I must say you ladies don't think of appearances, that you don't!" was the comment of the street. At a less sensitive moment we might have derived comfort from the tone of admiration in which this was uttered. As it was, an outrageous remark that followed did far more to raise our drooping spirits. This one was made by a girl, wearing a flaming hat and blouse that not one of us would have had the courage

to put on before going for a walk, even if supported by so magnificent a youth as the one on whose arm she leaned as she criticized.

"Brazen, ain't they?" she said.

After that, it was easy to laugh and go ahead in a world that could always be counted upon to feed the most unsatisfied sense of humour. Otherwise, for the first half-hour or so, I doubt if we should have felt acutely conscious of anything but the traffic. Glorious as it may seem to the imaginative to suffer for a cause, one finds it difficult, when carrying sandwich-boards in its service, to detach from this distant and problematic reward the more immediate prospect of being run down from behind by a skidding motor-omnibus. In time, no doubt, it would be possible to acquire the easy swagger of the real sandwich man, though the real sandwich man would under no circumstances be submitted, as we were, to a definite onslaught from every impudent tradesman's boy who whizzed past us on a tricycle. As it was, no one could have said that our pace bore the slightest resemblance to the leisurely saunter of the professional patroller of the gutter. In spite of conscientious efforts on our part to maintain the regulation distance from one another, none of us could resist the impulse

to catch up the next woman in front; and as our leader, the tall woman in purple, desired nothing more than to cover the prescribed route and return to the shelter of home as quickly as possible, only he who ran could have read the announcement printed on our boards, as we raced breathlessly along the edge of the pavement. At the same time, we found, nobody had the slightest difficulty in reading the identity of those who carried the boards.

"Suffer-a-gettes! Look at 'em!" roared an omnibus driver.

"Well, why not?" responded a gallant cabman from the shelter we were approaching. "Why shouldn't Mrs. Pank'urst 'ave a vote, same as you an' me? Ain't she got as much sense in her 'ead as what *I* 'ave?" He modulated his belligerent shout to a dulcet undertone as we came alongside. "The whole of the four-wheel trade is with you, ladies," he told us confidentially.

A block in the traffic caused us all to close up for a moment, and we compared notes hurriedly.

"Not so bad as we expected, is it?" said our literary comrade, who was one of those to overhear the friendly remark made by the representative of the four-wheel trade.

The girl in green reserved her opinion. "It makes one feel desperately sorry for the poor men who have to do this sort of thing, not for a cause, but for a living," she said feelingly.

The girl in green was by nature sentimental. Having once sold a suffrage paper in the street for half a day, she found herself incapable ever afterwards of resisting the appeal of the street hawker, with the result that her flat became a depôt for patent toasting-forks, bone collar-studs, and quivering, iridescent beetles. Her latest conviction that a human link existed between her and all sandwich-men received, however, a slight shock as soon as we encountered one of these. Melting with compassion, she tried in a single look to express all she felt for his hard lot, but was met by a still more eloquent expression of pity from his eye—the one that did not wink—and became henceforth a little dubious about that particular human link. We tried, but without much success, to rekindle her faith in human links generally, by pointing out that his scorn was probably aroused by the unprofessional appearance of her sandwich boards, one of which was slipping its ribbon moorings as she went by.

Perhaps the most startling conversion we made in the course of our parade was that of the baby. Up to

that moment it had been a plain and placid, contented baby, banging its Teddy bear happily against the side of the perambulator. When it saw our procession coming along, with flying colours and flapping boards, it dropped the Teddy bear on the pavement and emitted an amazing remark that sounded to all of us, except our literary member, like "Ga-ga-ga-ga-*ga*!" Our literary member, being imaginative, declared that what the baby really said was—"Hooray! Votes for Women!"—and the baby's nurse, who had to soil her white cotton gloves by picking the Teddy bear out of the mud, seemed inclined to agree with her.

"Them 'orrible Suffragettes!" she said crossly; and remembering the militant countenance of the baby we had converted, we felt bound to forgive her for feeling uneasy about the baby's future. Our triumph was short-lived, however, for we were scarcely out of hearing of the baby's gurgles when a gentleman outside a public-house informed us, with some difficulty of utterance, that we were a disgrace to our sex.

"What do they mean, blocking up the King's 'Ighway, undreds and undreds of 'em?" he grumbled fiercely. As the girl in green observed, he was not in a condition when it would be fair to challenge his ability to count.

On the whole, the triumphs won as usual, and the insults were too funny and pathetic, both at once, to hurt much. There was the lady who told us very distinctly what she thought of us, and then dropped her skirts in the mud, a real feminine sacrifice, to take one of our handbills, because her hard heart was melted by the absent-minded smile of our literary member, who mistook her for a supporter. There was the clergyman who stood with his hat in his hand the whole time our procession was going by; there was the sentimentalist who, after telling each one of us in turn to go home and mind the baby, said in a tone of concentrated despair to the last of us—"What would you do if you had twins?" And, of course, there was the messenger-boy who stood just out of reach and yelled—"Want yer rights? Then you won't git 'em! Sooner give 'em to tomcats, I would!"

By the time we arrived in sight of home, even the woman in purple had become hardened to the perils and vicissitudes of the road and smiled quite easily at the postman who stood at the corner of the street. But when we found ourselves inside the shop, in full view of the shop looking-glass, it required all our newly won insensibility to stifle an inward consciousness that the glories of a militant campaign still remained rather spiritual than actual. Our hair was damp and

straight, our cardboard armour limp and bent; our skirts were caked with mud, and our boots strongly resembled those that one sometimes sees sticking out of river sand at low tide. For once, our literary comrade refrained from asking us to turn to George Herbert or anybody else for poetic consolation.

On the other hand, the postman's criticism became wildly, disproportionately cheering.

"Votes for women!" he shouted after us with a sneer, as we slowly passed indoors out of his sight. "Votes for a few rich women, that's all you're after!"

Under the circumstances, it was very pleasant to be mistaken for representatives of the rich and cultured classes.

IX
The Black Spot of the Constituency

I am inclined to think that the best general is he who never listens to warnings. Nobody, for instance, warned us not to hold a meeting in the Council Schools, where a number of apparently educated, if very young, gentlemen came to express their political opinions through the medium of motor-horns and chemical explosives. The warning would have made no difference, of course; the point is that it was never uttered. When, on the other hand, we announced that we meant to carry our election campaign into the black spot of the constituency, where a criminal population congregated thickly in a few mean streets,

warnings came quick and fast. They were the normal warnings, telling how the police hesitated to penetrate there after dark, how it was never safe at any time of day for a woman to walk there alone, and so on, and so on. There is a black spot like that in most cities, and the same things, rightly or wrongly, are generally said about it. But when you are a pioneer, however humble a pioneer, you discover that the one person who may walk with safety in the heart of a criminal district is the rebel man or woman who is out fighting for a human cause.

No doubt, the elementary school child looks upon the Prime Minister who arranges for a general election to occur during the Christmas holidays as a sort of fairy godfather; but the pioneer, who hopes to advance her cause as a by-product of a Parliamentary election, would find the political situation considerably simplified by the elimination of the juvenile element. Anthropologists probably know all kinds of reasons why the young human creature always wants to throw things at what he cannot understand; and if I had to humanize the embryonic hooligan of our back streets, I believe I should begin by setting up a mysterious-looking target, a different one every day, in a prominent place, in order to gratify this elemental instinct at the least possible cost to the pioneer.

Not having thought of this simple plan in time, however, those of us who first penetrated the black spot of our constituency on a canvassing expedition met with a good deal of concrete obstruction.

"I am used to banana skins," remarked one canvasser, on her return to the committee rooms; "I can even bear mud; and stones are never aimed with enough determination to matter much; but I should like to draw the line at red herrings. There is something so peculiarly atmospheric about red herrings."

"Chestnuts are worse," said another woman, producing the one that she had intercepted on its way towards her face. "When I am advancing a suffrage argument for the hundredth time, there is a nasty subtle significance about a chestnut."

The tax collector, happening to stroll in just then to buy a ticket for a meeting, kindly tendered us his sympathy. He had frequently to endure the same unfriendly treatment at the hands of children, he told us, when he visited their homes in his official capacity. This information did not meet with the response he evidently expected from us, and realizing that voteless women could not be reasonably expected to feel furiously hostile towards anybody who pelted a tax collector, he admitted a difference in the point

of view and beat a tactful retreat, warning us as he went to refrain from attempting an open-air meeting in the criminal district.

"You won't do any good there," he assured us; "they are too stupid to understand, and they may make things very unpleasant for you."

This would have been true, perhaps, of an open-air meeting in a respectable neighbourhood, not to say of a drawing-room meeting anywhere. In a respectable, law-abiding district, it is always difficult and frequently dangerous to hold an open-air meeting. To begin with, you have to stand for some time without any audience at all, saying "We are the Suffragettes; we have come here to talk about votes for women," over and over again, with an ingratiating smile, to a policeman with a coldly detached air, and, perhaps, a young man on the opposite side of the road, who is longing to listen but dare not cross over for fear of being identified with lawless young women whose husbands and babies languish untended in the theoretical home. Afterwards, when these preliminary efforts have successfully assembled an audience, it is generally one that is too stupid to understand, and it frequently makes things unpleasant for the speaker. All this may be confidently expected to happen in

respectable neighbourhoods, where the standard of conduct is conventional enough to have brought unconventionality within the jurisdiction of lynch law.

In the black spot of our constituency, however, these familiar difficulties scarcely seemed to exist for the open-air speaker, least of all the preliminary difficulty of collecting an audience. The moment our wagon appeared, flying the tricolour flag that stood for no party cry and for no party candidate, the audience came in rushes from all the alleys and dens in the neighbourhood, and in less than two minutes one looked down upon a swaying mass of tattered and slatternly humanity that would have been horribly pathetic if for one moment it had been less than human. As it was, one merely realized that when the narrow barrier of circumstance that separates the fortunates from the unfortunates of this world has once been swept away, human points of contact are multiplied, not diminished.

The audience naturally gave the speaker in the lorry no time to make philosophic reflections.

"Don't look as though she'd been fed on skilly, do she?" was a sally that produced instant applause.

"Here, miss!" shouted a young hooligan, pushing

into prominence a good-looking girl whose open, laughing face might have belonged to any child of twenty in any sheltered home. "She's been to 'Olloway; can she have a vote?"

"Not much!" roared the crowd.

Our militant member, distributing leaflets on the edge of the crowd, smiled on the girl as she went shuffling off. "I've been to prison myself," she said, by way of breaking the ice; "what can you have done at your age to get there?"

The girl threw back her head with another laugh. "Oh, a drop of beer and a few words with a copper!" was the easy reply.

After that, it was a simple matter to get into conversation, and other women, who were not laughing, gathered round to listen.

"You Suffragettes have made things in the 'jug' a lot better for us pore women," said one, more intelligent-looking than the rest. "They give us chiny mugs now, 'stead of them tins, and——"

"I 'ope as you'll git inter Parlyment, that I do!" chimed in another.

"Yuss! Good luck to you!" cried a chorus of voices.

They vented their new-found enthusiasm upon a bibulous gentleman, who was asserting with drowsy monotony that he didn't want women to have votes, not he! He wanted them to love, honour, and obey——

"Stow it!" they broke in impatiently. "Forgettin' your manners, ain't you?"

The woman in the lorry was telling them why she went to prison, two months ago. She soon had her audience well in hand, human points of contact not being far to seek in a crowd to whom it was at least unnecessary to explain that women did not go to gaol for fun. A passer-by, who happened to drift there from the prosperous part of the constituency, stopped to make this hackneyed insinuation and was well hooted for his pains by a crowd that knew more than he did of the experiences described by the speaker. Even the drowsy sentimentalist, realizing, one might almost suppose, that his proper place was rather at a drawing-room meeting than at a street-corner one, went elsewhere in search of love and obedience; and the crowd of derelicts that remained, growing more numerous every minute, pressed closer and closer to the lorry till they

swarmed up the wheels and over the sides and sat at the feet of the woman who had been where they had been, and suffered what they had suffered, for a cause they dimly began to understand because it appeared to be connected with prison and suffering. Even their primitive minds could receive an impression of the woman standing up above them, against the crude light of the street lamp, standing for something that was going to bring a little warmth and brilliance into a cold neutral world, the warmth and brilliance that they had somehow missed. Emphatically, these people were not of the stuff that melodrama and novelettes are made of. They had never discovered what is sensationally called the romance of crime, and there was nothing splendid or attractive in the offences that had sent them to gaol. Some day or another, in a dull past, they had exchanged the dinginess of unemployment for the ingloriousness of petty crime, that was all.

A woman, bedraggled and dishevelled, strayed across from the public-house and stood for a moment gazing vacantly up at the trim little figure of the woman in the cart. She was past listening to anything that might be said.

"Shameless!" she commented, and drifted away

again, unheeded. The adjustment of standards was bewildering; and one felt that here was another interrupter whose mental attitude was that of the drawing-room and not of the street corner.

The speaker made an end and asked for questions. They did not come with any rapidity. People who have done with the conventions of conduct are not anxious to know what is to become of the baby and the washing of the housewife who wants to cast a vote at a Parliamentary election. There was a pause; then the speaker declared the meeting closed. The meeting, however, declined to be closed. The crowd stood motionless, waiting for more; and they had it, when a real electioneer, wearing party colours and bristling with party commonplaces, stepped up to the fringe of the audience. He brought a breath of prosperous unreality with him, and when his objection, the usual apprehensive one about future women members of Parliament, was aptly answered from the lorry, the habitués of the place broke into noisy exultation.

"Nipped 'im in the bud, she has! Give it 'im agin, miss; give it 'im 'ot!"

As it happened, she had to give it to him again and again, he being one of those hecklers who are never nipped in the bud, but think that if they ask

the same question often enough they will catch the speaker unawares in the end. Unable to do this, after failing to accept or indeed to comprehend the answer that was patiently repeated four times, the ingenuous heckler wanted to know if the lady did not think he could sufficiently safeguard her interests in Parliament, and went away feeling sure he had the best of it, but wondering slightly why she laughed so immoderately at his parting shaft.

The wagon moved slowly off, and the meeting reluctantly broke up. The woman who had been speaking looked down upon her slowly dispersing audience, and tried to draw conclusions.

"One feels at home with these people," she said. "I wonder why it is?"

"Society has broken down their barriers, and they haven't learnt to set up new ones," suggested some one.

"'The saints and the sinners meet in the gaols,'" quoted our literary member, softly. "Suffragettes forced to be sinners, and sinners who are not given a chance to be saints—oh, it's easy to see why we two should be fellow-creatures!"

The saints and the sinners, slouching back to their dens, passed a similar verdict, if differently expressed, on the woman who had been speaking.

"Good old sport, that's what *I* call the old gal!" cried a young fellow, challenging criticism in a threatening tone.

"Same 'ere," returned the pretty girl-sinner, or saint, not laughing this time, as she looked after the flapping flag that had brought a streak of colour, for one hour of her turbulent existence, into the black spot of the constituency.

X
"Votes for Women—Forward!"

When our local committee determined, in the words of the minutes book, to open a shop and offices in the local main street, "for the dissemination of suffrage literature," we made up our minds that we would not be amateur shopkeepers. The success of our venture, we argued solemnly, depended on convincing the neighbourhood that we meant to be taken as seriously as any other tradesman in the street. Unfortunately, in saying this, we reckoned without our customer; for, if you attempt to be taken seriously as a shopkeeper, the one error to be avoided is that of taking the customer seriously.

Naturally, we began by taking the customer very seriously. The first one who entered the shop was instantly confronted with three eager shop assistants, who asked him breathlessly and in unison what they might have the pleasure of showing him. He replied politely that he had known perfectly well what they might have the pleasure of showing him, before they asked him what it was, but that their unbroken front and commercial zeal had entirely put it out of his head. Two of us thereupon beat a wise retreat and left the field to the militant member of our committee, who promptly told our first customer that she was sure he wanted a suffrage tie in the colours. He agreed to this, dubiously at first, afterwards with real alacrity when she offered him the alternative of a tobacco-pouch, prettily decorated with a hand-painted sketch of Holloway Gaol, done from memory.

"I never smoke a pipe," he explained, excusing himself for his firmness over the tobacco-pouch; "but I can wear the tie, perhaps, when I call on people who won't allow me to talk about votes for women."

"This tie will speak for itself," said the shop assistant.

"It will," agreed her customer with a warmth that seemed to us excessive, until we perceived that the

tie was oozing forth in all directions from the insufficient piece of paper in which it was being wrapped up.

After the departure of our first customer, we reconsidered the position. It was evident that as shopkeepers we started with a distinct handicap, being ourselves amateurs in selling, whereas no customer is ever an amateur in buying. A woman may never have entered a suffrage shop in order to buy an instructive pamphlet, but most women know how to pass a pleasant half-hour in a hat shop without buying anything. We must be on our guard, we decided, against the customer who came, not to buy, but to shop, the opportunities open to the customer for falling short of the shopkeeper's ideal of her being greatly multiplied when the shop at which she shops is one for the dissemination of suffrage literature and not for the display of spring millinery. Also, on the initiative of the militant member of our committee, it was resolved that only one person at a time should serve any one customer, and that if a second customer should enter while everybody was still hunting for the pamphlet the first customer wanted to buy, somebody should call "Shop!" in a professional tone up the spiral staircase, in order to disabuse the minds of both customers of the notion that we were new

at our work. We found, on carrying this last precept into practice, that it had a marked effect on the waiting customer, though very little on the mythical resources of the spiral staircase.

Having settled down to wait for the customers who were going to make our shop a thriving business, we found that the majority of them belonged to those who went out to shop and not to buy. Numbers of them, indeed, seemed to be there on the assumption that if you want to buy something, one shop is as good as another in which to seek it. A good deal of useful experience is probably gained in this way by the one who shops; but when you are the shopkeeper, you wish it could be gained at somebody else's expense. We felt this very strongly the day that our door was burst abruptly open by a ragged, unkempt gentleman who wanted a soup ticket.

The childlike confidence of this particular gentleman in the ability of the Suffragettes to supply his wants, was at once pathetic and complimentary; but the pathos of it did not reveal itself to the haughty, disapproving lady who was already in the shop, giving advice to us all. She left at once, clearly convinced that really good unsought advice was wasted on people who kept such low company, an opinion that would have been startlingly confirmed had she

waited long enough to see the ticket-of-leave man.

The ticket-of-leave man came in to ask if we could give him a job. Obviously, he belonged to the great army of those who can do "anything"; we had no job to give, and told him so—a little curtly, I am afraid, as a consequence of many previous interruptions from those who did not come to buy. He stood a moment, fumbling at the latch of the door without raising it; then he turned round again.

"Don't send me away, lady," he pleaded. "I've been to prison too, same as all of you."

The woman who alone among us answered to this generic description of a mild and blameless local committee, came swiftly forward.

"I'm sorry," she said. "What can we do for you, and what made you come to us?"

The man jerked his hand towards the corner of the street where a policeman stood on the point. "Said he couldn't help me himself," was the reply. "Oh, he spoke kind enough, I'm not complaining of the coppers——"

"No, of course not," agreed our militant member. "He's especially nice, that one. He's the one that arrested me in Parliament Square."

Another customer, who was making a genuine purchase, was struck speechless by this calm announcement on the part of an amiable-looking shop assistant; but the ticket-of-leave man went on with his tale unemotionally.

"He said to me—'You go to the Suffragettes yonder,' he said; 'they'll help you if anyone can,' he said. So I came in on the chance like."

We were rather sorry that our friend on the point sent us no more ticket-of-leave men to vary the monotony of business life and to add to the circle of acquaintance of our militant member. She, however, always maintained that it was an error of judgment, if not of taste, on our part, to present the policeman who had once arrested her with the hand-painted tobacco-pouch, though she admitted that he might use it for the rest of his life without discovering what the sketch of Holloway Gaol was meant for.

The customer who was most destructive of our peace was the kind of amiable person who, having completed an infinitesimal purchase, stayed to chat, monopolizing the one shop chair and barricading a diminutive counter against anybody else who might really want to buy something. We greatly preferred the flippant jester who, attracted by our ingenuous

notice inviting people to come in and ask for what they did not see in the window, would sometimes put his head in at the door to ask facetiously for a vote; but we were rather glad that the humorist of the street was, as a rule, too short to reach the latch, and had to satisfy his sense of humour by assuming that the name of every woman in the shop, not excluding the charwoman, was Pankhurst, a quip that afforded exquisite joy to the little crowd that loved to hang round our doorway, besides advertising the object of our shop very nicely. Sometimes, the limitations of the street repertoire became a little tiresome. Admitting that the phrase "Votes for Women" could not be said seriously too often in a reactionary world, we felt that it was out of place when hurled as an original remark through the letter-box by somebody who instantly ran away. This method of backing a belief in any cause, though practised in high places, might well be eradicated, we thought, in very small and very elementary school children before it was too late; so we caught one of them, a little girl staggering under the burden of a large baby, and made her listen to reason. She was extremely friendly about it, said she didn't see but what we were right, even if we did smack policemen's faces, and kindly promised to come and have a look round, as soon as her little sister was free to take over the responsibility of the baby.

It became increasingly difficult to sustain our professional pose as the shop grew more popular, because kindly old ladies insisted on coming in to ask if we took our meals regularly, and to beg us not to fall down the spiral staircase, which looked perilous, I suppose, to any one who saw us for the first time steering a tea-tray down its ramifications, but always seemed to us pleasantly emblematic of our mounting aspirations. Curiously enough, it was on the day the shop was photographed that we finally won our way to the respect of the trade, though at the time nothing in our business experience had made us feel so much like children playing at shop.

Everything in the neighbourhood under the age of twelve rushed helter-skelter to the spot. As fast as the photographer swept them to one side of the pavement, they closed up on the other; and only his experienced agility and a lightning camera enabled him to procure a picture that did not resemble an advertisement of the Children's Holiday Fund. All this was in the nature of a Roman holiday for the neighbourhood, but we, summoned to the doorstep to form part of the picture, felt it was to be counted among the lesser sacrifices that have to be made for a cause. The bystanders, of course, did not take this view of our behaviour.

"Look at 'em," said one of these, just as we were miserably submitting to being grouped in self-conscious, affectionate attitudes that did not remotely convey the business-like relations of a business-like committee. "That's what they like! Votes for women, indeed!"

Fixed by the glassy eye of the camera, we were unable to reply to this; so our scornful critic went away, doubtless confirmed in his belief that there is no higher reward for a rebel woman than that of standing in a thin blouse, at a street corner, to be photographed, blown about by a cutting east wind, jostled by yelling children, and exposed to the chance of recognition at any minute by some disapproving friend or relative.

"Nobody will ever look upon us as real people in business, after that," sighed one of our shop assistants when we regained comparative privacy behind the counter.

"Nobody," acquiesced our militant member, gloomily. "And only this morning, I was really feeling like a genuine tradesman when I took down the shutters and agreed with the man next door that trade will never improve as long as this Government is in power."

"Our trade certainly won't," agreed a chorus of anti-Government agitators.

The door was suddenly flung open, and a boy came in and flung a sovereign on the counter.

"Could you oblige Mr. Bunting with change, please, miss?" he asked briskly.

That was all. There was no condescension in his tone. There was no impudence in his manner. He did not ask if we wanted our rights now, or if we would sooner wait till we got them. He did not say he had no wish to see women sitting in *his* Parliament. He just stood there, as shopman to shopman, waiting to effect a trade transaction that raised us, once and for all, beyond the level of amateurs.

Nothing approaching a sovereign's worth of change was in the chocolate-box hopefully described by us as the till; but our militant member, now as ever, knew how to rise to a great occasion. She looked up from the column of figures she had hastily pretended to be adding up when the shop bell tinkled, seemed to take in the boy's request with difficulty, called "Forward, dear, please!" in a languid tone up the spiral staircase, then returned to the column of figures. No lady of business experience in any shop or any post office

could have been more exasperatingly irrelevant.

The rest of us looked fearfully at the boy in front of the counter. He was kicking his heels together and whistling tunelessly. Her procedure had, indeed, not erred in a single detail; and he saw nothing aggressive in her behaviour. Henceforth we knew we could count on being treated in the trade as equals.

XI
The Person who cannot Escape

The lady of the manor seemed gently amused when I criticized the architecture of the cottage in which I had taken rooms, on the farther side of the village.

"It is not picturesque, like those that belong to us," she admitted; "and I always think it was a little unwise of Horace to let that piece of land for building purposes without having the plans submitted to us first. Still, the land was no good for anything else, not even for allotments; and if we had stipulated for gables and things of that sort we might have it still on our hands, a prey to taxation."

"I'm not thinking of the outside," I said; "it's the inside that matters when you have to live in a place. Nor am I thinking of myself, being in a position to leave whenever I find it impossible to endure the discomfort another minute——"

"My dear," said the lady of the manor, looking concerned, "is it as bad as that? I told you it was absurd to expect to find rooms in a primitive place like this——"

"I am not thinking of myself," I repeated, "but of poor Mr. and Mrs. Jim Bunce, who have to live there always because there isn't another cottage in the place, to say nothing of all the little Bunces, three boys and a little——"

"Oh!" she smiled, instantly reassured; "don't worry about them. They are not writing books, like their lodger. You must remember that the poor do not feel things, as you and I do; otherwise, they would appreciate nice houses when they get them. Only think how disheartened Horace and I were over those sweet gabled cottages we re-fronted for them down by the marsh——"

"Were those the ones you told me on no account to go to?" I interrupted, presuming unkindly on an old friendship.

I was told not to be unreasonable. "Naturally, I advised you to go to a newer place where the sanitation would be better," said my hostess. "I am sorry you don't like the Bunces' house, but that is your own fault for not coming here when you were invited."

"It seems to me rather more the fault of the man who built the Bunces' house," I represented, still unreasonably, as I gathered from her expression. "Have you seriously studied its front elevation? A child could draw it on a slate:—two rooms upstairs, two rooms downstairs; two windows upstairs, two windows downstairs; chimneys anywhere you like, but never in direct communication with fireplaces, as the lodger discovers when the fire is lighted in the sitting-room."

"It is no use trying to teach these people anything," murmured the lady of the manor; "of course, damp wood, badly laid——"

"It reminds me," I continued, "of a dolls' house I once had, made out of a packing-case, neatly divided into four compartments, with a staircase jammed against one side of it and brought to an abrupt termination by the doorstep. The staircase is exactly like my dolls' house one, so steep that a false step lands one straight in the front garden with no conscious interval for falling. Mrs. Jim kindly provides against

this contingency by leaving the front door always open," I added hastily, in deference to a look of renewed concern.

The lady of the manor agreed that there was something in what I said about the defects of modern architecture. "They do not build as they once did," she observed sententiously; "but then, the peasantry is not what it used to be. If the poor were still thrifty and hard-working, and did their own brewing and baking——"

"How can they?" I interposed. "You should see Mrs. Bunce's daily attempt to cook me a milk-pudding in an oven that never bakes anything equally on both sides, and sometimes refuses to bake at all. Oh! I never know what or why the poor are supposed to brew, but I do know that they cannot bake in the houses they are obliged to live in."

"My dear," was the reply I received to all this, "you have only yourself to blame for seeking impossibilities in a country cottage, when you might have settled down with your typewriter in the blue room over the library, and had your meals regularly. I do not pity you in the least."

"I do not pity myself," I said. "The person to be pit-

ied is the person who cannot escape, never the person who can."

As I walked back to the cottage that was built on the plan of a dolls' house, I wondered how long it would be before I availed myself of my privilege of escape. When I first became Mrs. Jim Bunce's lodger, a polite fiction existed that I was to dwell apart in the two front rooms, away from the family, a detached and superior position that might have made the writing of books a possibility. Unfortunately, this magnificent isolation had to yield to the force of numbers. There was only a sketchy, ill-fitting door between me and the kitchen, and I shared to some extent in the family joys and sorrows—they were generally sorrows—even when this was closed. More often it gave way before sudden pressure, and burst open to admit a crawling baby, followed by an assortment of small boys, pigs, chickens, puppies, and anything else that was young and undisciplined, brought up tempestuously at the rear by Mrs. Bunce and a broom. The writing of books did not thrive under these conditions, nor in the more strenuous moments that followed when the baby girl, bored and whimpering, had been carried off and set upon the flagstones under my window with nothing more thrilling to engage her attention than a piece of firewood.

The baby for once was not crying when I arrived back at my rooms, a state of grace that was accounted for when I came upon her mother, who was laying my tea, with the baby tucked under one arm.

"She be that okkard I canna keep her quiet another way," was Mrs. Jim's simple explanation of her feat of skill.

It seemed an opportunity to make friends with the greatest disturber of my peace, and I rashly flirted with the baby until it was converted into the firmest of allies. Nothing, as it turned out, could have been more destructive of my future hopes of accomplishing work. If it was difficult to write when the baby cried, it became impossible when the baby laughed. I cannot recommend the game of "peep-bo" to any one who seriously wishes to combine business and recreation, though the baby's mother seemed to regard it habitually from this point of view. I have seen her play "peep-bo" while she mixed puddings, fed pigs or boys, washed clothes, scrubbed floors, buried a dead chicken, or parcelled out the weekly income into its amazing weekly budget. Perhaps she led a less chequered existence during the month I stayed with her; for without acquiring her agility in doing housework with the baby under one arm, I became

an expert in distracting the baby's attention from an insistent tooth, and found this far harder work than any job I was ever paid for. I came to the conclusion that one does not know much about hard work until one has lived with somebody whose work is never done and never paid for.

This was particularly impressed upon me one evening, when, having put the children to bed, fed every live thing that clamoured in the thickly populated back yard, cleared away her husband's supper and watched him start for the village club, Mrs. Bunce told me she was going to step across the road to do the week's washing for a sick neighbour. This little act of humanity, mentioned so casually as to divest it of the slightest taint of charity, kept her at the washtub till past midnight; and at five the next morning I heard her go downstairs to get her man's breakfast. After that, one felt it would be an immense relief to hear her grumble. She never did; and there were moments when I began to see points in the comfortable theory held by the lady of the manor with regard to the insensibility of "these people."

There was the day, for instance, when the baby, after crying fretfully for two hours, took to battering a saucepan lid with a tin spoon. I had borne its wails

with set teeth, but this new and excruciating din took me into the back room, bent on remonstrance. I was met with a beatific smile from Mrs. Jim, who was peeling potatoes at the sink.

"Bless her heart!" she said placidly. "That be the first time as ever she's been quiet this morning!"

Finally came the day when stolid, undemonstrative Mrs. Bunce upset all theories as to the wonderful patience of the poor. The lady of the manor called with an annual invitation to a mothers' tea. It was Saturday afternoon, and the weekly house-cleaning was in full swing. The inopportune visitor, stepping over a heap of small boys whose tangled arms and legs suggested the interior of a fisherman's worm-can, came next upon the baby, who, in her week-end pinafore, was still hopefully sucking a spoon that had once held jam. The jam was distributed impartially over the baby's countenance, and no one could pretend she was looking her best, a criticism that might have been applied with equal truth to her mother, who was engaged in cleaning the kitchen flues. The general effect of Mrs. Bunce's home was certainly not that of the picturesque cottage interior so dear to the imagination of those who live remotely in manor-houses; and it was easy to see that this lady of the manor wel-

comed such a heaven-sent opportunity of being feudal, as she alluded in a perfectly kind and courteous manner to the disarranged condition of the kitchen stove and the mottled complexion of the baby.

She gave her invitation as a sort of consolation prize at the end, and went away without waiting to hear if it was accepted—as in the good old days, I suppose, when a refusal would have been met with the *oubliette*. I walked up the road with her, and learned how necessary it was to speak out now and then; otherwise these young mothers grew so careless and slovenly. The idea of slovenliness in connection with this particular young mother, who to my knowledge did the work of all the servants in the manor-house, in addition to being a wife and a mother and a dressmaker, left me incapable of speech.

Mrs. Jim Bunce, who had remained silent and immovable while the duty of the rich in speaking plainly to the poor was being fulfilled, sat playing with the baby on her lap when I returned to the house. There was just time to reflect that she had chosen a curious moment at which to suspend her weekly attack upon the flues, before she gave me a further surprise.

"You wouldna think as I didn't never want to have a girl when I had this one, would ye, miss?" she jerked out abruptly.

Still failing to understand that anything unusual was happening, I said something stupid and polite about a personal preference for little girls. She smiled across at me rather queerly as she started suddenly to her feet and caught the baby to her with a quick, passionate gesture that made it cry out with astonishment.

"It bain't that," she said roughly. "I didna want to bring another woman into it."

She stood there, looking at me fiercely, and the baby gave another whimper to express its outraged sense of the fitness of things. There was nothing heroic in the woman's figure; I think her hair was coming down, and there was soot about her, and her blouse wore a general air of bulgy disorder. At her feet lay strewn the symbols of inartistic toil, a hairless stove broom, a cracked saucer with a mess of blacklead in it, some indescribable bits of rag. Over it all hung the sickly smell of stale, unventilated air, mingled with the fumes of damp and smouldering wood. It was assuredly not the setting for a great situation. Yet, as we stood there, looking at each other, in the little hush that fell upon us after that outburst of the rebel mother, I found myself wondering if I had ever known how great situations are made.

The baby struggled to escape from an embrace it did not understand; and, of course, the baby was right. Mrs. Jim Bunce recognized the call of convention, and acknowledged it by giving a sound scolding to those portions of her family that happened to be within reach. The flues were attacked afresh with tempestuous energy; the baby was left sobbing and neglected in one corner, the sprawling boys scurried to another. I was told as plainly as looks could tell that my place on a Saturday afternoon was not the home.

I decided that this was not the moment to explain to Mrs. Jim Bunce that an age was dawning in which women would be glad instead of afraid "to bring another woman into it."

XII
The Daughter who stays at Home

"I suppose you think," Penelope threw at me with unnecessary vehemence, "that it is only the daughter who lives away from home who is really a rebel."

"On the contrary," I said, "most rebellion is bred in the home. Napoleon said——"

"Oh, I know what Napoleon said," interrupted Penelope. "At least, I know the kind of thing he must have said, if you want to quote it. Seriously, I don't think you know what it feels like to be the daughter who comes back to live at home, after being handicapped by a modern education. You see, the daughter has gone on, and the home hasn't. It isn't moth-

er's fault, because she naturally thought she was fitting me for home life when she let me take a college course in housewifery. But what is the use of knowing all about the chemistry of cooking and the science of house-cleaning, if you have to apply it in a home that has stayed in the same place for a hundred years? Everything and everybody is against one, from the abominable kitchen-range to the cook who has been with mother ever since she was married. You are going to say Napoleon again."

"I was going to say," was the cautious reply she received to this, "that the only victories which leave no regret are those that are gained over ignorance."

"Who said that?" demanded Penelope suspiciously.

"Napoleon," I admitted.

"Now that we have got rid of Napoleon," proceeded Penelope, coldly, "perhaps you will take some interest in—oh, what rubbish to say that about the victories that are gained over ignorance! All the victories you win at home are victories over ignorance, and they always leave regret behind, always, always! That is why it is much worse to win than to lose, when you fight at home, ever so much worse!"

"Having got rid of Napoleon," I said soothingly, "why do we not talk as though we had? Tell me what is wrong with your mother's house, from the college point of view."

Penelope stopped looking crestfallen, and chuckled. "It is all creepers outside and old sinks inside," she exclaimed concisely. "But when I said that to mother, she didn't understand one bit. She even seemed a little hurt. I didn't mean to hurt anybody's feelings, naturally; I was trying to be funny. Do you think," she added irrelevantly, "that there was ever a time when my grandmother called my mother new-fangled?"

Knowing Penelope's mother, I said I thought this possible; knowing Penelope, I went on to suggest that tact was an excellent substitute for humour in the home.

"I know," she sighed. "But it is only in books that the daughter of the house is a monument of tact and goes about her household duties, rattling an enormous bunch of keys and singing snatches of gay song. I don't know how you sing snatches of anything, but if it in the least resembles what Sarah sings when she is cleaning plate, I am very glad that only one of us does it. Of course, there is mother's old bunch of keys if I want to rattle as I walk; but as soon as I found out

that only two of these opened anything, I took off those two and tied them together with a piece of ribbon. Even mother admitted the wisdom of suppressing five-and-twenty keys that belonged to no existing locks; but Cook regards my piece of unofficial key ribbon as one more proof of new-fangled ways. You don't know how difficult it is to be a daughter of the house with success when half the house knew you as a baby, and the other half wishes it had never known you and your new-fangled ways at all."

I asked for details of the new-fangled ways, and the unsuccessful daughter of the house cheered up slightly. "You should have seen their faces," she said, "when I drew up a time-table of meals for a whole week in advance, to save wasting Cook's time, and mine, every morning. Cook nearly gave notice."

To my objection that somebody's unusual appetite or the arrival of an unexpected guest would upset the time-table for the rest of the week, she retorted that the same might be said of the time-table for any one day. "In both cases you would merely send out for something extra," she represented. "But I can't induce Cook to see that. She says it has never been done that way, and—oh, you know the rest! It's so queer, isn't it, that people think there is something abnormal and

unfeminine about you if you get the housekeeping done in ten minutes instead of spreading it over the whole morning? Besides, when I set out to make a list of meals for a whole week, I choose a moment when I am feeling hungry and therefore inspired. That gives one a chance of inventing something new; but if I go into the kitchen directly I have eaten a large breakfast, the thought of more meals is intolerable, and I say 'Yes' to all the dull old dishes that Cook suggests."

The housework led to more rebellion, she proceeded to complain. "I did my best to persuade Sarah that if she would do the cleaning in a labour-saving sort of way she would probably have time to go for a walk every day before luncheon. That caused a revolution." Pressed for particulars of the revolution, Penelope chuckled again. "First, there was Cook, who said she had never been in any place where the housemaid went for a walk before luncheon; she further intimated that she could not stay in a place where the housemaid, etc., etc. Then there was mother, who said that, of course, she would not dream of interfering when I was doing everything so nicely, and all that; but if I went away at any time it would be very awkward for her, as she couldn't have the maids going for walks at all hours of the day, with no one to see where they went. I pointed out to her that I should not dream of

seeing where they went, if I were at home, also that they already went out on stated evenings, when it might be even more desirable and was certainly less possible to see where they went. Mother was just beginning to understand—mother is splendid, really, you know!—when Sarah spoiled everything by declaring that nothing would induce her to go out in the morning. She had never been expected to do such a thing in any other place, and she wasn't going to be put upon now. If she could have another evening instead and an extra Sunday—well, after that, all was sound and confusion, and mother issued from the struggle kind but triumphant. Since the plate-cleaning episode, which followed close upon the revolution, I have felt a mere flattened failure of a daughter."

The plate-cleaning episode had been caused by the attempted introduction of a cleaning-cloth, which dispensed with the necessity for plate powder or metal paste. "Sarah seemed quite pleased about it at first," said Penelope with a sigh. "She pretended to understand perfectly when I explained how nice it would be to have a clean and empty housemaid's cupboard, instead of having every shelf crowded with plate-brushes and bits of sodden rag and tins of sticky brass paste, and that horrid saucer full of plate powder that sprinkles pink dust over everything when it

gets dry. You know that kind of cupboard, don't you? Well, Sarah took to the idea like a lamb, and everything was going splendidly when mother caught her rubbing up the drawing-room candlesticks with my new patent cloth; and because I couldn't prove on the spur of the moment that the Sheffield plate would be none the worse for it fifty years hence, mother said she had the utmost confidence in my judgment, but she could not help feeling that the old way was safer. After that, I found Cook putting the cloth on the fire with the tongs, while Sarah hoped impressively at the top of her voice that she hadn't given herself blood-poisoning by using the nasty-smelling thing. So now all the old pink saucers and tins and things have reappeared in the housemaid's cupboard, and the plate-cleaning once more occupies the whole of the morning, and the brass occupies another and the stair-rods another, to say nothing of all the useless copper pots and pans on the kitchen chimney-piece that Cook never uses, but won't let me put away—oh, we are jogging along quite comfortably now in the dear old way of a hundred years ago!"

The sequel to this occurred about a week later, when I went to call on Penelope's mother and found ladders placed against the front of the house, and the trailing creepers of ages given over to the ministrations of the local nurseryman.

"Yes," said Penelope's mother, complacently, "they should have been cut before. Creepers are unhealthy things; they shut out light and air and spoil the window architecture. As Penelope says, the outside is the only part of any house on which the architect has expended either skill or attention, so it is a pity to hide it."

I said something polite down her ear-trumpet about new ways of looking at these things; and Penelope's mother smiled in agreement. "Some people do not know how to move with the times," she said. "Because a thing was done in a certain way a hundred years ago, let it be done in that way for ever and ever, they say. Yet, by bringing intelligence to bear upon the common things of every day, even toil may become a pleasure, and duty—well, duty almost ceases to exist. Of course, I am speaking figuratively," she added hastily, as if she felt she had gone too far.

Not knowing exactly how duty could be a figure of speech, or how, indeed, it could ever be anything else, I remained silent before this reincarnation of the earliest Victorian lady I know; and Penelope's mother took up the silver teapot—not, however, to pour out tea, but to point out to me its shining surface.

"In my housemaid's cupboard," she said proud-

ly, "you will find no pieces of sodden rag, no tins of sticky brass paste, or that unpleasant saucer that sprinkles pink dust over everything within reach. We have banished all that in favour of—ah, Penelope, my dear, run and ask Sarah for one of my new cleaning-cloths, will you?"

In the doorway stood Penelope, mockery shining from her eyes.

"And you dare to tell me that tact is more useful in the home than a sense of humour!" she cried, in a voice that thrilled with scorn.

"At all events," I retorted, "you must admit that Napoleon——"

Penelope went hastily to fetch her mother's new cleaning-cloth.

XIII
The Game that wasn't Cricket

Down the alley where I happen to live, playtime draws a sharp line between the sexes. It is not so noticeable during working hours, when girls and boys, banded together by the common grievance of compulsory education, trot off to school almost as allies, even hand-in-hand in those cases where protection is sought from the little girl by the little boy who raced her into the world and lost—or won—by half a length. But when school is over sex antagonism, largely fostered by the parent, immediately sets in. Knowing the size of the average back yard in my

neighbourhood, I have plenty of sympathy for the mother who wishes to keep it clear of children. But I always want to know why, in order to secure this privacy, she gives the boy a piece of bread-and-dripping and a ball, while the girl is given a piece of bread-and-dripping and a baby. And I have not yet decided which of the two toys is the more destructive of my peace.

Every evening during the summer, cricket is played just below my window in the hour preceding sunset. Cricket, as played in my alley, is less noisy than football, in which anything that comes handy as a substitute for the ball may be used, preferably an old, jagged salmon-tin. But cricket lasts longer, the nerves of the parents whose windows overlook the cricket ground being able to stand it better. As the best working hour of my day is destroyed equally by both, I have no feeling either way, except that the cricket, as showing a more masterly evasion of difficulties, appeals to me rather more. It is comparatively easy to achieve some resemblance to a game of football even in a narrow strip of pavement bordered by houses, where you can place one goal in the porch of the model dwellings at the blind end of the alley, and the other goal among the motor traffic at the street end. But first-class cricket is more difficult of attainment

when the field is so crowded as to make it hard to decide which player out of three or four has caught you out, while your only chance of not being run out first ball is to take the wicket with you—always a possibility when the wicket is somebody's coat that has a way of getting mixed up with the batsman's feet.

In spite of obstacles, however, the cricket goes on every evening before sunset; and all the while, the little girl who tripped to school on such a gay basis of equality with her brother only a few hours back, sits on the doorstep minding the baby. I do not say that she actively objects to this; I only know with acute certainty that the baby objects to it, and for a long time I felt that it would be at least interesting to see what would happen if the little girl were to stand up at the wicket for a change while her brother dealt with the baby.

And the other evening this did happen. A mother, making one of those sorties from the domestic stronghold, that in my alley always have the effect of bringing a look of guilt into the faces of the innocent, shouted something I did not hear, picked up the wicket, cuffed somebody's head with it and made him put it on, gave the baby to a brother, and sent his sister off to the oil-shop with a jar in one hand and

a penny tightly clasped in the other. The interruption over, the scattered field re-formed automatically, somebody else's jacket was made into a mound, and cricket was resumed with the loss of one player, who, by the way, showed an astonishing talent for minding the baby.

Then the little girl came back from the oil-shop. I know not what spirit of revolt entered suddenly her small, subdued soul; perhaps the sight of a boy minding the baby suggested an upheaval of the universe that demanded her instant co-operation; perhaps she had no distinct idea in her mind beyond a wish to rebel. Whatever her reasons, there she stood, bat in hand, waiting for the ball, while the baby crowed delightedly in the unusual embrace of a boy who, by all the laws of custom, was unsexing himself.

Another instant, and the air was rent with sound and fury. In front of the wicket stood the Spirit of Revolt, with tumbled hair and defiant eyes, breathless with much running, intoxicated with success; around her, an outraged cricket team, strong in the conventions of a lifetime, was protesting fiercely.

What had happened was quite simple. Grasping in an instant of time the only possible way of eluding the crowd of fielders in the narrow space, the little

impromptu batswoman had done the obvious thing and struck the ball against the wall high over their heads, whence it bounded into the open street and got lost in the traffic. Then she ran till she could run no more. Why wasn't it fair? she wanted to know.

"'Cause it ain't—there!" was one illuminating reply.

"'Cause we don't never play that way," was another upon which she was quick to pounce.

"You never thought of it, that's why!" she retorted shrewdly.

She was desperately outnumbered. It was magnificent, but it wasn't cricket; moreover, her place was the doorstep, as she was speedily reminded when the door reopened and avenging motherhood once more swooped down upon the scene. A shake here, a push there—and the boy was back again at the wicket, while a weeping baby lay unheeded on the lap of a weeping Spirit of Revolt.

And the queer thing is that the innovation made by the small batswoman in her one instant of wild rebellion has now been adopted by the team that plays cricket down my alley, every evening before sunset.

XIV
Dissension in the Home

"I should be delighted to get up a meeting for you in my house," said the enthusiastic new recruit. "I always have said that women who paid rates and taxes—I beg your pardon? Oh, speakers—of course, speakers! Well, they must be the very best you have; people get so easily bored, don't they? And that's so bad for the cause." She reflected an instant, then fired off the names of three famous Suffragettes and was astonished to hear that the well-known leaders rarely had time to address drawing-room meetings.

"Isn't that rather a mistake?" she suggested, with the splendid effrontery of the new recruit. "It is so important to attract the leisured woman who won't

go to public meetings for fear of being stuck with a hatpin. I'm really afraid my crowd won't come unless they see a name they know on the cards." Finding that this made no appeal to one who had heard it often before, she asked in a resigned tone if a window breaker would be available. "If I could put on the invitation card—'Why I broke a Prime Minister's window, by One who has done it,' they'd come in flocks. No, it wouldn't matter *much* if she had broken somebody else's window. As long as she had broken something—do *you* speak, by the way? Your voice is hardly strong enough, perhaps?"

The suffrage organiser, hoarse with having held two open-air meetings a day for the past week, admitted that she did speak sometimes. "I've been to prison too, if that is any good," she added cynically.

The cynicism was unperceived. "Have you? But that will be perfectly delightful! Can I promise them that you will speak about picking oakum and doing the treadmill? Oh, don't they? I thought all the Suffragettes picked oakum in Holloway, and that was why they—never mind! You've really eaten skilly, and that ought to fetch them, if anything will. The Chair? Oh, I really don't think I *could*;—I should die of terror, I know I should. What should I have to do?

Yes, I suppose I could tell them why I want a vote. I always have said that women who paid rates and taxes—yes, Wednesday at nine o'clock. You'll come and dine first, won't you? It's so good for the unconverted to meet you at dinner, just to see that you do know how to hold a knife and fork. My husband is so very much opposed; I like to do all I can in a *quiet* way to show him that the Suffragettes are *not* all—can't you really? Well, come as early as you can; I shall be simply dead with nervousness if I'm left unsupported. By the way, you'll wear your most feminine frock, won't you? I hope you don't mind my mentioning it, but it is so important to impress the leisured woman—to say nothing of my husband! I am so anxious to avoid causing dissension in the home; I think that would be *wrong*, don't you? Of course, I shall let them all think that you may turn up in goloshes and spectacles; it will make the contrast all the greater, and that is so good for the cause!"

"Mrs. Fontenella wants to give a drawing-room meeting," said the organiser, when she returned to the office. "She seems to have a curious set of friends who look upon suffrage as a sort of music hall entertainment; so she wants me to speak because I have picked oakum in Holloway, and you, because you have broken something. I think she must be an Anti by birth."

"Oh, no," answered the woman who had broken something. "She is really a Suffragette by birth, and only an Anti by marriage. I am glad we have won her back again."

"Then why does she talk as if we were all mountebanks?" asked the other, unconvinced.

The breaker of Government plate glass shook her head slowly. "I don't know," she said. "I think, perhaps, it may be because she has lived eleven years with somebody from whom she is obliged to conceal what she really feels about things."

"She isn't obliged to conceal anything; nobody is!" cried the organiser, hotly. "If these people had the courage to show fight—"

"They have—when the fight is worth it," struck in the older woman. "Those are just the people whose courage is inexhaustible, when real courage is required. I don't know why it is so, unless it is that they haven't wasted it over things that don't matter, and so they have a reserve fund to draw upon for a great occasion. That's the best of a cause like ours—it furnishes them with the great occasion."

"Mrs. Fontenella's reserve fund must be colossal," said the organiser, still unconvinced.

The audience that was lured to Mrs. Fontenella's house on Wednesday evening by a prospect of meeting two eccentric females who had been to gaol—doubtless because they richly deserved it—was composed of the elements that usually go to make up such audiences. It was very rich, very idle, very limited; it was polite by education and rather insolent by nature; and, with the exception of one or two of the men, who nursed an academic belief in the woman's vote because they hoped that under masculine influence it might be used to strengthen the right political party, it was not interested in politics. The men were there because they thought it was a sporting idea of the most popular hostess in their set to pretend to be a Suffragette; and the women were there to show their disapproval of a shrieking minority, who, for the sake of notoriety, were rapidly destroying the ideal of womanhood that had been implanted in every Englishman's breast by his mother;—at least, those were the reasons they gave one another for being there, as they sat in rows on gilded upright chairs, waiting for the fun to begin. When it did begin, they experienced a distinct sensation of having been cheated of their entertainment.

It was not that they found it difficult to recognise the most popular hostess they knew in the apologetic

lady who stood up, glittering with gems, against an expensive background of hothouse plants, and read out platitudes from a type-written paper in a high-pitched, jerky voice; though everything was wrong in that opening speech from the Chair. It was flippant without being funny; it threw up defences where it should have attacked; it jarred where it should have conciliated. One at least of the two women who shared the platform with her, chafing under the huge mistake of her speech, felt inclined to agree with the audience that the speaker was only pretending to be a Suffragette. It was not this that disappointed the audience, however. It had expected nothing else from one of its own set, who was obviously unfitted both by nature and upbringing to sustain a part that she had only assumed because it was something new—just as she might have hired a pianola or a gramophone when these two were novelties. But it was not fair to invite people to meet two hooligans who had fought with policemen, and then to confront them with two normal looking, normally dressed women, of whom it was impossible to believe anything that was not consistent with breeding and good form. Disappointment grew when the faltering little speech of the Chairman came to an end, and the younger of the two Suffragettes, with a fleeting glance at her notes, rose to her feet. A woman who had picked oakum

and defied wardresses—their hostess had omitted no detail likely to attract her "crowd"—had no right to a soft, humorous voice, or to an educated accent. Entertainment there was of a sort; for the most obdurate Anti-suffragist could scarcely have remained proof against the wit and good temper of the girl who stood there, undaunted by the atmosphere of opposition that filled the room, turning the laugh against her opponents with every point that she made. Still, it was not the kind of entertainment they had been led to expect, and a certain amount of discomfiture mingled with the laughter and the applause that she won by the time she sat down.

Then the older woman, the one who had broken windows, took her place. There was nothing conciliatory, nothing amusing in what she said. She did not raise a laugh once; she uttered no sort of appeal; she never so much as hinted at an apology for what she and other women like her had felt impelled to do. She made some of her listeners angry; some of them she moved deeply; others she greatly perplexed; but she left none of them precisely where they had been when she began to speak, and when she sat down there was hardly any applause. Nearly every man in the room was staring at his boots; the women played with their lace and their rings, avoiding one another's

eyes. A few were horribly ashamed of having tears in theirs.

The Chairman did not rise for a moment or two. She was scribbling something rapidly on a piece of paper, which she twisted up and sent down the length of the brilliantly lighted room to a man who stood lounging carelessly in the doorway. He untwisted it with extreme deliberation, crushed it up in his hand when he had read it, and looked his wife straight in the eyes, across the backs of the waiting people in the chairs. She met his look for just two seconds before she stood up and cleared her throat.

The rows of people in the chairs stirred with a sensation of relief. Eloquence and wit, they knew, were not in the repertory of Mrs. Fontenella when she was posing as a Suffragette; but at least she could be counted upon not to make them feel uncomfortable. When she stood there silent, gripping the table with both hands and looking straight down the room, along the road that her twisted scrap of paper had taken to the man in the doorway, they began to think something was a little wrong.

Did she, realising that the last speaker had overstepped the limits of good taste, feel incapable of dealing with the situation? It was certainly a little

awkward for her to continue to occupy the Chair, under the circumstances.

"Ask for questions," prompted the organiser who sat on her left; and she pushed the agenda paper towards her, thinking she was nervous and could think of nothing to say.

Mrs. Fontenella was not nervous. She glanced round at her prompter with a reassuring smile and brushed aside the agenda paper. Then she faced the crowd she had brought there under false pretences, and gave them the second shock they had received that evening.

"Friends," she said, in a voice that no longer faltered or apologised, a voice that was pitched exactly right and held her listeners strangely, "the last speaker has told us that another deputation of women will try to reach the presence of the Prime Minister, next week. You know what that means—almost certain imprisonment for the women who go on that deputation, but also a certain chance for every one of us to do something towards winning a great reform. I am going on that deputation. Which of you will come with me?"

Those who managed furtively to look round at the

man in the doorway, were extremely puzzled by the interested smile he wore.

"You were right about that woman, and I was utterly wrong," confessed the organiser, as she walked away from the house with the other speaker. "I do hope she won't have a bad time with that Anti husband of hers!"

"You never know," said her companion, who had seen the interested smile of the man in the doorway. "That's the blessed thing about marriage;—you never know."

"What!" exclaimed the younger woman. "Do you mean to say he is a Suffragette by birth, too?"

"No," was the reply. "I should say he was an Anti by birth; but I think he may be a Suffragette by marriage, though I doubt if he or his wife had found it out until to-night."

In a long and brilliantly lighted drawing-room, desolate with its rows of empty chairs, the popular hostess who was also a Suffragette stood alone with the man whose smile had puzzled everyone who saw it, half-an-hour ago, except the woman who had broken windows.

"It's simply magnificent of you," said his wife.

He took a walk round and moved some of the expensive hothouse plants. "I hate these things," he said. "Why do we have them? Let's open some more windows and get rid of the smell."

She laughed, and watched him go across to manipulate blinds and bolts. "You are always the same man I married, even when you are quite different, as you were this evening," she remarked, with equal inconsequence.

"You're not the same woman as the one I married!" he shot back at her.

"But I am!" she cried. "I am, I am! And that's the whole point!"

He looked round at her, the smile back in his face. "Perhaps it is," he said. "Perhaps it is. Pity we've both missed it for eleven years, isn't it?"

THE END

Rebel women

Evelyn Sharp

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EVELYN SHARP

REBEL WOMEN

Evelyn Jane Sharp, born August 4th, 1869 and died June 17th, 1955, she was a pacifist and writer who was a key figure in two major British women's suffrage societies, the militant Women's Social and Political Union and the United Suffragists. She helped found the latter and became editor of Votes for Women during the First World War. She was twice imprisoned and became a tax resister. An established author who had published in The Yellow Book, she was especially well known for her children's fiction.